

THE NATIONAL BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL TEACHING CERTIFICATION:  
TEACHER MOTIVATION, BENEFITS, AND BURDENS

BY

LISA RENEE KRAUSE

DISSERTATION

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Doctoral Committee:

Professor Marilyn Johnson-Parsons, Chair  
Professor Sarah McCarthy  
Associate Professor Karla J. Möller  
Clinical Assistant Professor Linda Sloat

## **Abstract**

The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards process is considered by some to be teacher professional development, which is a vital part of the field of education. This study investigated twelve educators who began the National Board process, studying their motivation to begin, the benefits they gained, and the burdens they faced. Each of the twelve participants was independently interviewed and then eight of them were brought together at the end for a focus group discussion. Nine of the twelve participants began the process and achieved certification and the other three participants began but did not complete the requirements. The findings included the fact that many of these educators went into the process blindly and for a variety of internal and external factors including wanting professional growth, a professional challenge, and the stipend that comes with certification. Eleven of the twelve had a support group to assist them in the process, and the main burden of the process was the amount of time that it took to complete the requirements. As the researcher as well as a participant in this study, I wanted to see if other educators had similar or different experiences with the National Board process. The findings suggest that while each participant has a unique and personal experience, their journeys also had numerous similarities.

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

The K-12 public educational system in the United States is universally available to all children including the wealthy and poor as well as the learning disabled and the gifted. Students are required to attend school (public, private, or home school) from age five to age 14-18 (depending on state mandates), and schools are required by law to meet the needs of each student and provide him or her with an appropriate education. One of the greatest challenges in the educational system in the U.S. is meeting the needs of a very diverse group of students.

The 2008 Statistical Abstract reported that 75% of the population is White, 15% is Hispanic (ethnicity, of any race), 12% is African American, and Asians make up 5%. Four percent of the population listed their race as “some other race alone” while two percent listed their race as “two or more races.” American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islanders make up less than one percent of the total population. These figures add up to more than 100% because Hispanic and Latino Americans are distributed among all the races and are also listed as an ethnicity category, resulting in a double count. Sixty-five percent of the US claimed to be White Hispanic or Latino Americans. Not only is the U.S. diverse in terms of race, but also religion, socioeconomic status, mobility, language, and other factors that affect student learning and achievement. For example, a new survey by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life states that 51% of the population is Protestant, 23% are Roman Catholic, 16% of people claim they practice no religion, and the remaining 10% of people are Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish, or other Christian. Meeting the needs of this diverse group of students is challenging and six million teachers in the United States step up to this challenge each year. There is a well-

established body of evidence that shows teachers are the most important school-based factor in relationship to student achievement (Goldhaber & Brewer, 1999; Rice, 2003).

Research shows that effective teachers produce high levels of student achievement, but measuring the direct effectiveness of a teacher is complicated. States have attempted to do this through standardized testing, which is often not well correlated with what is taught, causing controversy about these types of tests and single measures to evaluate teachers (Popham, 2001). Further, these tests only evaluate the knowledge of students on one particular day of the year, and many factors such as lack of sleep, social interactions, family situations, or lack of motivation can be detrimental to their scores. Tests also vary by state; some may be more challenging than others; the result is that some teachers look more or less effective than others. These scores also do not show gains made from one year to the next. For example, a student might come into sixth grade reading at a third grade level. Even if that student gains two years of reading ability as indicated by the tests and is now reading at a fifth grade level, he/she will still score below the state standards on the sixth grade test and that will reflect poorly on the teacher. There are also issues with teachers who only teach advanced classes, or special education classes, and thus their students' test scores from standardized tests do not accurately represent their teaching ability.

Teachers are also evaluated by their building administrators, often by principals observing their classrooms two to four times a year, sometimes less. These evaluations are sometimes done by different administrators so rating consistency is questionable. A standardized form is used for evaluation (often the same form is used district wide) and principals fill these out during a classroom observation. This method is criticized because the evaluator only sees a snapshot of teachers' practices and thus may not be evaluating accurately or consistently.

Observations are often scheduled ahead of time giving teachers plenty of time to prepare, suggesting that teachers may be more prepared than usual for the lesson being observed.

As a classroom teacher, I have seen firsthand how these two common forms of evaluation (test scores and observations) have failed to recognize successful teachers. For example, I have worked very closely with two special needs educators whom I believe to be two of the very best. Each year their students make gains of more than a grade level in both math and reading. They provide accommodations and modifications so that their students are successful, and they make personal connections with their students that last for years. Unfortunately, their students often do not pass their standardized tests (usually due to their disabilities) and consequently these great teachers go unrecognized. Equally as frustrating, I have seen less successful teachers put together outstanding lessons each year for their observations and then teach poorly the rest of the year. It is disheartening to hear the principal say wonderful things about teachers like this, when people who work with them know otherwise.

One of my colleagues told me about the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and the NB process that teachers can complete to achieve national certification. After doing some research, I learned that this process certifies less than three percent of the nation's teachers (NBPTS, 2013). It does so through measures that are more extensive than the typical principal-visit format. The NB process is an evaluation of a teacher's entire teaching practice over a full school year through extensive snapshots that show the multiple components of teaching.

To achieve certification, teachers have to submit video recordings, analyze student work samples, show content knowledge below and above the grade level they teach, incorporate technology into their practice, make connections to other disciplines, detail their professional

development and accomplishments, and do extensive reflection on their practice. This seemed to me to be a more thorough assessment of teacher effectiveness.

I decided to complete the NBPTS requirements myself. I was intrigued by the fact that so few teachers were motivated to complete the accreditation process. Both my decision and my completion led to my dissertation research related to teachers' motivation to complete the NB process and the benefits/burdens they faced along the way.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Diversity in the United States is increasing and this diversity is then represented in public schools. In order to best serve diverse student populations, schools need high quality teachers who are successful in raising student achievement. Unfortunately, the current ways of evaluating teacher effectiveness are not very accurate. The National Board process is a process to identify effective teachers (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2004). The findings of this study will be helpful to district administrators if they want to know what motivates teachers to complete the National Board process and to encourage more teachers to apply for certification.

### **Significance of Study**

Recognizing excellent teachers should be of importance to district officials. With budget cuts being made in education and teachers being let go due to these cuts, districts should want to identify their highest quality teachers. The number one goal of the educational system is to provide an appropriate education for each student, and research shows that highly effective teachers can do just that (Bond, Smith, Baker & Hattie, 2000). By figuring out what motivates teachers to pursue National Board Certification, districts may be able to encourage more teachers to apply for NBPTS thus providing one way to identify effective teachers.

Why should teachers complete the NB process to become Nationally Board Certified?

There are numerous benefits for teachers identified in the literature. Those who certify are often given monetary incentives from the state as well as from their local districts. They are recognized as effective educators, are seen as teacher leaders in their district, and are often called upon to lead professional development meetings or mentor new candidates. There are also benefits to the teachers who complete the NB process but do not successfully complete certification. For example, these teachers still went through a rigorous professional development process in which they were required to reflect on their practice and were given feedback. They become part of a professional culture with a common pedagogical language, striving to use ‘best practices strategies’, and studying their content area. District leaders and school administrators should also be interested in what motivates teachers both to begin and to complete this process. With this knowledge they would be able to encourage their teachers to pursue a professional development process and possible certification.

### **Research Questions**

The two main questions of this study were as follows: What motivates teachers to complete the National Board process? What benefits and burdens do they face by going through the requirements? The sub questions/interview questions are detailed in Appendix A and the focus group questions are in Appendix B.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP):* Each state defines the high standards that result in continuous and substantial academic improvement for all students.

*Highly Qualified:* This term comes from the No Child Left Behind law in 2002. It is used when describing any K-12 teacher that has obtained full state certification in teaching, has a



bachelor's degree, has passed state licensing examination (usually content specific), holds a current license, and has not had certification/licensure requirements waived on an emergency, temporary, or provisional basis.

*National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS):* An independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan, and non-governmental organization governed by a majority of teachers. The focus is on the teacher and is based on Five Core Propositions that encompass what the Board defines as standards.

*Nationally Board Certified Teacher (NBCT):* Any teacher who has achieved National Board Certification.

*No Child Left Behind (NCLB):* A Federal Law signed into effect in 2002. It is built on four specific pillars that include accountability, more flexibility within the states and school districts, increased options for parent involvement, and a strong dependence on research based strategies for teaching. A major focus of the law is that schools use scientifically based research reading programs so all children will read on level by the end of third grade. In the spring of 2010, President Obama released the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as a precursor to the reauthorization of NCLB. He encouraged extra funds for states to use varied assessments as opposed to the traditional standardized tests that had been used in the past. He also proposed that accountability punishments be less stringent, taking into account the issues with English language learners and students with special needs. Supporting these varied assessments, *Race to the Top* is a state competition program authorized under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. It provides funding for schools and districts to develop valid assessments that are meant to be more accurate measures of instruction. The top priorities of this

program are to increase teacher and principal effectiveness as well as turn around low achieving schools.

*Teacher Effectiveness:* This term is used to describe successful teachers typically measured by state or standardized tests. Day to day practices such as managing a classroom, knowing and presenting content, and meeting the needs of all students are often sometimes considered as well.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Review of the Literature**

In this literature review, I will discuss several areas related to my study. The chapter begins with a definition and purpose of professional development, details its major characteristics, describes major approaches to professional development, and then details the research surrounding the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards.

#### **Definition and Purpose of Professional Development**

There are numerous definitions for professional development for teachers and education. Diaz-Maggioli (2003) defines it as a voluntary and ongoing learning process in which teachers engage to learn how best to adjust their teaching to the learning needs of their students. He continues, noting that it “is an evolving process of professional self-disclosure, reflection, and growth that yields the best results when sustained over time in communities of practice and when focused on job-embedded responsibilities” (para. 1, p. 3).

Professional development can also be defined as a way to help teachers understand better the content they teach. By improving their content understanding, teachers can make better curriculum and instructional decisions to improve student learning. Professional development does not only take place pre-service, or during the first few years of teaching. Rather, teachers’ professional development expands over their entire teaching lives (McIntyre & Byrd, 1998). Fullan (1991) agrees and says that professional development is “the sum total of formal and informal learning experiences throughout one’s career” (p. 326).

Professionals are expected to have a high level of expertise in their field and are also expected to keep current with trends and research (Fiszer, 2004). The purpose of teacher professional development should be to strengthen teacher practice and to give them the tools they

need to be as successful as possible in the classroom. The learning needs to be ongoing, interactive, and supportive of the teacher (Fischer, 2004). Education is changing; content as well as pedagogies, and teachers must change with it so that they continue to grow throughout their careers (Vrasidas & Glass, 2004). Certification processes are also changing, new policies are being established, and many schools are struggling with new accountability measures passed down from state and federal governments. Professional development allows teachers to successfully adapt to changing environments and integrate these policies into the classroom. Professional development should also focus specifically on how teachers construct their professional identities. This includes ongoing interaction with learners, reflection on their actions in the classroom, and adapting their teaching to meet the learners' needs. The ultimate purpose of professional development should be to promote effective teaching that results in learning gains for all students.

Teacher professional development is one of the most powerful ways to improve the quality of schools (Desimone, 2011). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 not only set up the procedures for high stakes state testing, but also suggested that professional development for teachers be given so that students' needs are adequately met. NCLB describes high quality professional development activities as those which "improve and increase teachers' knowledge of the academic subjects that teachers teach, that are sustained and intensive, and that are aligned with and directly related to state academic content standards, student academic achievement standards, and assessments" (NCLB definition of professional development, para. 1).

Up through the 2012-2013 school year, Illinois teachers were required to show some form of professional development for certificate renewal. Illinois had a three tier-system in

which teachers first obtain an Initial Certificate, then move to a Standard Certificate, and have the option of achieving a Master Certificate. The Initial Certificate was earned with the successful completion of an accredited bachelor's degree program and the passing of state-required teacher certification tests. These new teachers were considered ready to enter the classroom. After four years of teaching experience and proof of professional development, teachers could apply to obtain their Standard Certificate. This certificate was valid for five years. The professional development options included the completion of an advanced degree, becoming highly qualified in another teaching area, completing the NB process, earning eight hours of college credit in an education-related field, or earning continuing professional development units (CPDUs) within the district. Teachers who earn NBPTS certification were eligible to apply for the Master Teaching Certificate, which was valid for ten years.

On July 1, 2013, all Illinois educator certificates were converted into a professional educator license (PEL). One of the main reasons the state did this was to clear up confusion that often came with teaching certificates, about which subjects and age groups teachers are certified to teach, for example. With the new PEL system, there are only three types of licenses (Early Childhood, birth-grade 3; Elementary, K-9; and Secondary, grades 6-12) as opposed to the past system, which included sixty types of educator certificates, and content endorsements will be now be added to the licenses. Because of this conversion, there are no longer Initial and Standard Certificates, only licenses with specific designations/endorsements such as Master Teacher for those who achieved NBPTS certification. These new licenses (even those of NBCTs) are valid for the remaining time period on the current certificate. After that, each license will have to be renewed and registered at the end of five years with proof of professional development

requirements having been met. Professional development options with the new licensure system will be similar to that of the old certificate system.

### **Major Characteristics of Effective Professional Development**

Unfortunately, traditional professional development does not include much active participation. Teachers often are taught methods or presented with information using teaching strategies that are not aligned with active learning (Fischer, 2004). Teachers are accustomed to sitting through presentations that advocate hands-on activities, active engagement, and best practice methods, but are not presented in such a way. This is outdated, hypocritical, and does a disservice to educators (Fischer, 2004). Traditional professional development is too often short-term and does not provide teachers with ongoing opportunities to maximize their learning. Teachers are not offered many opportunities to advocate for what they would like to learn, or even asked for their feedback after the fact. At times, they are not required or held accountable to show that they have used the new information to improve their practice. There is also little to no interaction with colleagues during the trainings, or afterwards to discuss what they learned (Little, 1993). Most importantly, traditional professional development does not require teachers to lean into discomfort, be active participants in their learning, take ownership of their professional development, and reflect on their practice. Oddly enough, this is exactly what teachers ask of their students daily. With the new conception of teachers as professionals who are lifelong learners, active participants in their own growth and development, the traditional teacher training is no longer fitting.

Due to high stakes testing and high expectations in terms of student learning, educators have made a shift in how students are taught or in the content they teach (Ravitch, 2010). For students to reach the high expectations that have been set for them, skilled teachers will have to

help them (Garett, Porter, Desimone, Birman & Yoon, 2001). Because teachers are at the center of the educational reform, they are held responsible for carrying out the demands made by policymakers (Cuban, 1990) and teacher professional development then needs to be reformed to meet current educational needs. More current professional development programs focus on teacher learning being interactive, social, and surrounded by discourse and community practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999).

The National Staff Development Council's New Definition of Professional Development (2009) is "The term professional development means a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement." Schools today are quickly changing curriculum and pedagogy to fit the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). These standards are arguably either another way to constrict teaching or a way to advance student achievement with more rigorous standards, either way professional development must change. Wei, Darling-Hammond, and Adamson (2010) speak of current professional development:

Professional learning must enable teachers to work regularly together to improve their practice and implement strategies to meet the needs of their students. Without ratcheting up support for effective educator learning, the ability of teachers and school leaders to meet these new challenges will be diminished. (p. 8)

Some newer trends in professional development are mentor programs, professional learning communities (PLCs), and peer coaching/learning. Wei, Darling-Hammond, and Adamson (2010) report that currently 75% of beginning teachers participate in induction programs and 80% report having a mentor during their first years of teaching. The Met Life Survey of 2009 indicates that 75% of teachers indicate that they were provided with opportunities for co-planning with

colleagues. Biancarosa, Byrk, and Dexter (2008) documented effectiveness of a literacy collaborative coaching model by comparing learning gains in teachers' classrooms in the program vs. gains in the same teachers' classrooms during the base-line year. They found a 16% increase the first year when compared to the baseline year and a 27% increase the second year.

Professional development in an educational setting should increase the effectiveness of all engaged in it. Students are changing, technology is changing, researchers are learning more about best practice strategies, and effective professional development should embrace these changes and prepare teachers for today's classroom. Current trends focus on development and use of technology for instruction and learning as well as standards driven instruction (Means, 1994; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997). To sustain teacher learning that directly affects classroom practice, Fiszer (2004) argues that educators must provide a culture that requires and supports ongoing professional development.

A national study conducted approximately ten years ago showed that the presence of specific aspects of professional development programs are what matters when it comes to enhancing teachers' knowledge, skills, and practice (Desimone, Porter, Garrett, Suk Yoon & Birman, 2002; Garrett et al., 2001). "Some studies conducted over the past decade suggest that professional development experiences that share all or most of these characteristics can have a substantial, positive influence on teachers' classroom practice and student achievement" (Garrett et al., 2001, p. 4). These researchers' ideas are summarized below, detailing the important aspects of effective professional development opportunities.

#### **Component #1: Linked to and Supported by School/Curricular Reforms (Guskey, 1995)**

Many research studies show that professional development is most effective when it is part of larger reform efforts (whether it be in the school, district, state, curriculum, etc.) as



opposed to being implemented without a connection (Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson & Orphanos, 2009). Teachers tend to see the usefulness of professional development when the new practices are connected to other aspects of reform. If they see a disconnect between the new strategies and what they are required to do by district, state, and/or curricular guidelines, then the professional development has little impact (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

Educators in Ohio provided an example of a successful implementation of an integrated professional development model. In 1992 they wanted to improve student achievement in science across the state so a program was offered to help teachers use more inquiry-based teaching in their science classrooms. This professional development was grounded in the state standards and coincided with the state's goal to improve students' scores in the area of science. The National Science Foundation's *Discovery* program allowed teachers time to collaborate, provided support for teachers after the initial program led to an increase in inquiry-based instructional practices in science classrooms statewide (Supovitz, Mayer & Kahle, 2000).

**Component #2: A Collaborative Process (Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 1995), including collective participation and active learning (Garett et al., 2001)**

The United States has a history of allowing teachers to be very individualistic in their profession, spending all day in one classroom with little collaboration with others (Lortie, 1975). Traditions are often very hard to change but research shows numerous benefits for students if teachers are allowed time to collaborate to improve their practice. Little (1990) stated that “any interaction that breaks the isolation of teachers will contribute in some fashion to the knowledge, skill, judgment, or commitment that individuals bring to their work, and will enhance the collective capacity of groups or institutions” (p. 509). During this collaboration, collegial relationships are built, consistency in instruction emerges, teachers become more willing to share

practices, and they become open to new strategies to use in the classroom (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). Collaboration also allows teachers to discuss individual student needs as well as brainstorm ways to meet those needs, allows time to share common curriculum and materials, and provides the opportunity to discuss strengths and weaknesses of their practice (Garett et al., 2001).

Studies show that professional learning communities of educators not only increase teacher knowledge, but build collegial support and communication, strengthen teachers' instruction, and improve student learning (Louis & Marks, 1998; Supovitz & Christman, 2003). When teachers are active participants in these professional learning communities, student dropout rates decrease, test scores increase, teachers feel a sense of purpose and responsibility, and achievement gaps are narrowed (Newman & Wehlage, 1997). McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) have done extensive research on professional learning communities where teachers collaborate, share, and improve their practice through discourse and collegial support. They have noted several benefits of collaboration for both teachers and students and are supporters of professional communities as an effective form of professional development. Park, Oliver, Johnson, Graham, and Oppog (2007) investigated the importance of collegial support for teachers who were going through the National Board process. These teachers reported that having collegial support during this extensive professional development process provided them with support that was critical for their success.

### **Component #3: A Continuous Process (Fiszer, 2004)**

Numerous research studies show that when professional development is intensive, and allows teachers time to include application to their classrooms, student learning improves (Cohen & Hill, 2001; Garrett et al., 2001; Knapp, 2004). Professional development must be sustained

over time so that teachers can digest what they learned, develop ways to implement the strategies, implement the strategies, reflect on their practice, and make changes to best meet student needs (Fischer, 2004). A continuous process also allows for a chance for observation (through a supportive cohort, curriculum coaches, administration, or mentors) and feedback so that teachers can further improve those newly gained strategies (Garett et al., 2001). Many times, having a supportive cohort of teachers who complete a professional development process together over time is essential to its success (Futrell et al., 1995).

Only in the last decade or so has the professional development of teachers been considered a long-term process that includes regular opportunities and experiences planned systematically to promote growth and development in the profession. This shift has been so dramatic that many have referred to it as a “new image” of teacher learning and even a “new paradigm” of professional development (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001; Walling & Lewis, 2000). Sometimes the gains happen in the following year after teachers have had time to learn, implement, and refine their new strategies (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Often when new strategies are tried in the classroom, they are not successful the first time. Teachers must reflect on their practice, collaborate with colleagues, refine their pedagogies, and only then will they see positive effects (Ganser, 2000). If teachers see the positive impact on student learning over time they are more likely to continue the new practices. Teachers need multiple opportunities to absorb new information to successfully make it a part of their practice (Timperley, 2008).

#### **Component #4: Focus on both Content Knowledge and Pedagogical Knowledge**

Research shows that when professional development addresses everyday aspects of teaching and is modeled to fit teachers’ classrooms, it is more effective than when it focuses on abstract principles or ideas (Cohen & Hill, 2001; Garrett et al., 2001). Teaching is a multifaceted

profession where teachers need to have knowledge about their students and how they learn, as well as the content they teach. The best way to deliver content information to the students they teach is equally important, so is effective questioning, knowing how to teach mastery of basic skills (or procedural knowledge), and conceptual learning. The best professional development embraces all of these aspects of teaching so that teachers can best support the students they teach (Garett et al., 2001).

Many educators realize that if they are to be effective in their practice, the professional development they receive must include a variety of topics. Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) summarize their findings: “Teachers say that their top priorities for further professional development are learning more about the content they teach (23 percent), classroom management (18 percent), teaching students with special needs (15 percent), and using technology in the classroom (14 percent).” Effective professional development not only encompasses all of the key facets of teaching but is also transferable to students and the classroom (Desimone et al., 2002).

### **Other Components and Summary**

Further research shows that there are other effective components of professional development. Desimone (2011) concluded that there should be an ongoing evaluative process for professional development to make sure the desired results are achieved. She states it is important that the plan be constantly evaluated, feedback given to teachers, and that feedback is used to enhance the professional development experience. The standards for high quality professional development written in NCLB state that programs should be evaluated regularly for teacher effectiveness as well as student achievement.

Fiszer (2004) believes it is important that teachers are included in the planning and implementation so that their needs are met throughout the experience. He also thinks that since

teachers will have ownership in this experience they should be held accountable for their outcomes. Timperley (2008) agrees that teachers who are engaged in cycles of professional development should take more ownership of their learning as well as the learning of their students. She also found that, as teachers grow professionally, learning more about their students and how to meet their needs, they begin to feel more effective.

In summary, even within the same setting professional development may have different dimensions (Scribner, 1999). Whatever is chosen must fit the students, teachers, the school reform model, and meet the needs of those involved. There is no one size fits all model that will work for all teachers. Schools should look for the “optimal mix” of the above aspects and create a plan that works for their unique situation.

### **Major Approaches to Professional Development**

Professional development can be collective or individual; it can be continuing education, pre-service education, in-service education, group work, peer collaboration, self-reflection, district workshops, national programs, or even online classes (Vrasidas & Zembylas, 2004). These experiences range from formal seminars on scheduled in-service days to informal discussions with other teachers during the school day (Desimone, 2011). Professional development can also consist of workshops, local and national conferences, and/or college courses. Co-teaching, mentoring, reflecting on lessons, group discussions of student work, book clubs, teacher networks, blogs, and study groups, are all forms of teacher professional development (Ball & Cohen, 1996). Teachers often use online resources, communicate with people in the building (tech specialist, librarian, special education teacher, etc.), use personal inquiry or action research, investigate curriculum design/selection, and/or read professional journals to better themselves professionally. Professional development never stops and is

embedded in every teacher's daily life (Little, 1993). Table 1 summarizes the most common forms of professional development found in education today.

| Table 1  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>Forms of Professional Development</i>           |   |
| Forms of professional development                  | Brief Description   |
| Peer Coaching, Mentoring, or Collegial Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• planning--&gt;observation--&gt;feedback, also known as clinical supervision</li> <li>• pairs (or groups) of teachers visit each other's classes and provide feedback (Cogan, 1973)</li> <li>• partnering a more experienced professional with a less experienced colleague for collaboration and feedback</li> <li>• team meetings, content meetings, and other collegial discussions/experiences such as co-teaching (Darling-Hammond, 1997)</li> </ul> |
| Study Groups                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teachers reviewing professional literature or analyzing student work, possible partnerships with other institutions (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009)</li> <li>• professional book clubs</li> <li>• curriculum work, design, selection (Diaz-Maggioli, 2003)</li> </ul>   |
| Dialogue Journals, Blogs, Networks                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conversations in writing</li> <li>• connects colleagues across long distances</li> <li>• share expertise and/or reflections on instruction</li> <li>• can also be a personal narrative (autobiographical research) on experiences in the classroom</li> <li>• online resources available for teachers; online support groups (Peyton, 1993)</li> </ul>   |
| Portfolios or Project-Based Model                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a systematic collection of teaching artifacts and reflections that allows teachers to focus on and document their professional development, or show progression toward a goal</li> <li>• a focus on the teacher becoming more independent or a researcher/learner (Diaz-Maggioli, 2003)</li> </ul>   |
| Action Research or Self-directed Development       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• diagnosing a situation, reflecting on that diagnosis, and planning/carrying out an intervention for improvement</li> <li>• personal inquiry, self-readings (Cochran-Smith &amp; Lytle, 1999)</li> <li>• teachers identify a goal, come up with ways to accomplish that goal, and feedback is given at the end (Noffke &amp; Stevenson, 1995)</li> </ul>  |

Table 1 (cont.)

*Forms of Professional Development*

| Forms of professional development                         | Brief Description   |
|---|---|
| Lesson Study  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• participation with other professionals to examine practice or instruction through the analysis of a lesson, then improve collaboratively</li> <li>• observation of actual lessons with a focus on student thinking</li> <li>• teachers examine their own practice in the context of student learning (<a href="http://www.rbs.org">www.rbs.org</a>, 2012)</li> </ul>   |
| Reflective Observation/Supervision                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to observe/evaluate the performance of yourself or another teacher</li> <li>• teachers reflect on their own practice through video</li> <li>• administrators observe teachers in their classroom and provide feedback (Bellingham Public Schools 2006)</li> </ul>  |
| Workshops, Seminars, Conferences, Courses                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• university or college courses/degree programs</li> <li>• distance education</li> <li>• annual conferences by national groups</li> <li>• district offered workshops held locally (Mertens and Flowers, 2004)</li> </ul>   |
| Case Studies  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• using real world examples of teaching to initiate discussions among groups of teachers</li> <li>• often used to build up a rich picture of an entity, using different kinds of data collection and gathering the views, perceptions, experiences and/or ideas of diverse individuals relating to the case (Hamilton, 2011)</li> </ul>  |
| New Leadership Roles                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increasing teachers' participation in management, organization, preparation, etc. (Hickey &amp; Harris, 2005)</li> </ul>   |
| National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a process through which teachers reflect on their own practice through classroom video recordings, student work, and their own professional development experiences (Parks, 2004)</li> <li>• completion of a voluntary assessment program designed to recognize effective and accomplished teachers who meet high standards based on what teachers should know and be able to do (<a href="http://www.nbpts.org">www.nbpts.org</a>, 2012)</li> </ul> |

Those who put forth the professional development opportunities should be cognizant that some critical components must be present in order for the training /learning/development to be as effective as possible. Therefore, presenters should make sure their professional development can

be linked to current reform efforts, allows time for teachers to collaborate, can be made continuous, and encompasses both content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. Teachers, too, should be responsible for choosing opportunities that contain these key components so that they can be best prepared to positively affect student learning.

### **History of the NBPTS**

In 1983, the federal report titled *A Nation at Risk* raised public concern for the American school system. This report stated that American schools were failing and that reform was necessary. It noted that the United States' educational system was failing to meet the economy's needs, those needs being to produce students who are competitive in the workplace. The quality of teaching and learning at all grade levels was questioned and it stated that "if an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war"(A Nation at Risk, 1983, para. 2).

The report showed low overall national test scores, declining scores, and detailed many characteristics in the school system where the Americans should be concerned. Improvement was suggested in a way that made Americans feel that it was critical for the survival of the US school system. Suggestions were also given to improve the current flawed system. These suggestions were broken down into five categories:

- **Content:** Recommendations were made that all students get 4 years of English, 3 years of mathematics, 3 years of science, 3 years of social studies, and ½ years of computer science at the high school level.
- **Standards and Expectations:** Recommendations were made that 4-year colleges raise admission standards and incorporate standardized test scores into the admission process.



The thought behind this was that these high expectations would trickle down into the high schools, middle schools, and eventually the elementary level.

- Time: Longer school days were recommended as well as longer school years. Seven hour school days were suggested as well as 220-day school years. Today, most school days are at least seven hours long, but they do include nonacademic times such as lunch and recess. Most school years are closer to 180 days than to the recommended 220.
- Teaching: Salaries were suggested to be competitive and performance based and teachers receiving them needed to have command over their subject area.
- Leadership and Fiscal Support: Support should be provided to help teachers address the diverse needs of their populations. This included special education needs, socioeconomic needs, and the school-identified “gifted and talented” population.

The most important of these suggestions was the one stating that teachers needed to step up their teaching practice. They were saying that, if teachers would teach better and have higher performing students, they would be paid better. If schools were going to improve, teachers had to improve, yet there was no clear way suggested for how to do this equitably, validly, or reliably across diverse class and school contexts. Great teachers must be recognized, retained in the classrooms, and their accomplishments must be recognized. Potential exceptional teachers must also be recruited and encouraged to join the teaching profession.

In 1985 Albert Shanker first suggested the idea of national teacher standards. At the time, he was the President of the American Federation of Teachers and had a drive to improve the teaching practice. His vision included a group of people who would create a description of what an accomplished teacher would look like. This group would also develop an assessment tool to

measure teachers who wanted to complete the certification process. He saw this process being developed by a board of some kind and eventually being controlled by the profession itself.

In 1986, the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession issued another pivotal report, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*. This report detailed the reason why standards-based reform was essential and proposed the creation of a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). This group would note what teachers should be able to do and describe the assessment tools that would be used. Eventually, NBPTS was formed in 1987. The first step was to create a policy that would define the National Board's vision of accomplished practice. In 1989, NBPTS issued its policy statement, *What Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do*. This document has been the foundation of all the work that NBPTS has conducted. It listed the characteristics that successful teachers should possess. They include:

- Broad grounding in the liberal art and sciences
- Knowledge of the content taught, the skills to be developed, and of the curricular arrangement and materials that organize and embody that content
- Knowledge of general and subject specific methods for teaching and for evaluating student learning
- Knowledge of students and human development
- Skills in effectively teaching students from racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse background
- Dispositions to employ such knowledge wisely in the interest of students.

Also given was the mission statement for the organization. It contained the following three parts:

- Maintaining high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do,

- Providing a national voluntary system certifying teachers who meet these standards, and
- Advocating related education reform to integrate National Board Certification in American education and to capitalize on the expertise of National Board Certified Teachers.

This document promised a process of teacher improvement through self-reflection. It has not only served as a guide to teachers going through the certification process, but to districts, states, colleges, and other institutions that are interested in strengthening their teaching staff.

This idea was different than other reform efforts because it was a teacher improvement program that was created by teachers, with other teachers, and for teachers. The Carnegie Corporation of New York funded the establishment of NBPTS, following the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy's Task Force on Teaching as a Profession. A planning group was formed, later to turn into the NBPTS Board of Directors, and was chaired by former North Carolina Gov. James B. Hunt, Jr. This group was made predominately of teachers who were currently active in the classroom and who knew the complexities of teaching. When evaluating, they would focus on teacher work and the issues that teachers deal with on a daily basis.

The Board took on the job of ensuring that teachers who become certified meet and maintain these standards so that more of accomplished teachers will seek certification. They understood that "...public education is at a crossroads. We, the practitioners, will either take charge of it or sit by and watch it devolve, creating an ever-widening chasm between those who have and those who have not" (Mack-Kirschner, 2003, p. 1).

There were also critiques of the *Nation at Risk* report. One of the most popular responses to the *Nation at Risk* was a book published more than ten years later titled, *The Manufactured Crisis*. Berliner and Biddle (1995) argued that the report was just a way for politicians to mislead

the public about the quality of schools. They also questioned the statistics that were reported about educational failure. They claim that there was lack of citations for the statistics used to show the low quality of American schools. Goodlad (2003) points out that the report was successful in grasping the attention of the American public, but is saddened that the attention focused on the bad news and not on the recommendations made for improvement. He too questions the reported statistics and argues that the link between student achievement and the economy was overstated. Even though the report was challenged, it still had a strong impact on American education. The report led to school reform efforts, drew attention to education policy, and led to school accountability (Weiss, 2003). The development of NBPTS itself was a response to and critique of this document.

### **Description of the NBPTS**

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan and nongovernmental organization. This program was meant to advance the quality of teaching and learning by developing a set of standards for teachers to follow. It is a voluntary system to certify accomplished teachers who show mastery of these standards.

Similar to programs for board-certified doctors and accountants, this program expects teachers to meet rigorous standards through study, evaluation, self-reflection, and peer review. There are 25 different certificate areas that teachers, media specialists, and counselors can apply for, depending on the grade level and subject area they teach. Applicants also select an area of development that corresponds to the grade level they teach.

### **The Requirements for Teachers**

To be eligible to apply, applicants must have a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution, have successfully taught K-12 students (or served as a counselor for those getting

their counseling certificate) for three years, and hold a valid teaching (counseling) license for all of those three years. The organization also recommends that applicants have basic to semi-advanced computer skills, knowledge of video cameras and how they operate, as well as typing speed and accuracy. Organizational skills are also essential to successfully completing the national board process. NBPTS recommends that a teacher be willing to commit 200-400 clock hours to this process. Between reading the requirements and the standards, videotaping classes, selecting student work, doing the write ups for the four entries, and taking the assessments, much time must be devoted to the NB process.

Teachers are required to submit four portfolio entries as well as complete six computer based assessments at an assessment center. The first entry must be an analysis of student work. Usually two students are selected, preferably two at different levels, and the candidate is asked to analyze and reflect upon the work. The second entry is a videotape of a classroom activity that features the teacher candidate instructing a whole group. Classroom discussion and discourse are encouraged and candidates must discuss their practice. The third entry is similar to the second, but instead of whole class discussion, NBPTS wants to see the teacher candidate effectively working with small groups. The last entry is where the teacher candidate shows personal accomplishments made during the last year to five years. They must show themselves as learners, partners with the community as well as with parents, and as collaborators. In addition to these four portfolio entries, teachers are asked to go to an assessment center and take six tests that are 30 minutes each.

These portfolio entries are scored on a scale of 0.75-4.25 where a score of three or four represents accomplished performance, and a score of less than three represents less than accomplished teaching practices. Assessors are trained to think of each submission as a three and

then add or deduct points from there. Assessors are never given personal information about the candidates (name, school, and district) but score each entry with the candidate's ID number as the only identifier. The four portfolio entries constitute 60% of the overall score; entries one-three each are weighted 16% and entry four is weighted 12%. The assessment portion makes up 40% of the candidates score,  $6\frac{2}{3}\%$  for each of the six questions. Each of the assessment center exercises is a single question. A score of 275 out of 400 is needed for a candidate to achieve certification. The assessors are always teachers in the same content area of the candidate and have been through rigorous training to assure consistency in the grading process. Two assessors score each portfolio entry and their scores are averaged. National Board also puts all of its assessors through bias training to prevent judgmental scoring. This helps to prevent biases based on teaching practices or professional preferences.

Classroom teachers and counselors score NBC portfolio entries. Those wanting to be a scorer must have a bachelor's degree, have three years of successful teaching experience, be certified in the areas for which they are scoring, successfully complete NBPTS assessor training, have a state teaching certificate/license, and hold NB certification.

### **The Five Core Propositions**

The Board seeks to find teachers who demonstrate the five core propositions in their practice as well as in their writing. The five propositions are explained in detail below.

**1. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.** Nothing is more important than the belief that all students can learn. Teachers should not let issues such as poverty, ethnicity, native language, social status or any other factor sway their opinions about students. Accomplished teachers recognize these things about their students, realize all students have individual differences, build upon these differences, and find ways to use them to make learning

meaningful. It is also important to believe that all students can learn at high levels and to teach to them at those levels. Teachers must demonstrate that knowledge is accessible to all students, show that all students can learn, treat students equitably, recognize and highlight differences, and adjust practice based on students' needs. They must understand how students develop and learn and implement best practice strategies. Beyond academics, teachers foster motivation, character, self-esteem, self-efficacy and show respect for differences in cultures, religions, and races. Teachers should also know that learning happens as a result of modeling, retention, physical reproduction, and motivation.

An example of this core proposition would be to take a community walk. By doing this, teachers would get a better understanding of where his/her students come from, the houses they live in, the stores and restaurants close by, and what the neighborhood is like. It may not always be successful, and teachers can reflect on that, but the hope is that teachers do these activities with the mindset to identify personal biases and let them go. Another example would be to incorporate scaffolding into daily practice. Scaffolding instruction as a teaching strategy comes from Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and his concept of the *zone of proximal development* (Vygotsky, 1987). Scaffolding is very important because research shows that students learn based on what they already know, plus a little more (Chang, Chen & Sung, 2002). Teachers have to know their students and the challenges of each class, and lessons must be tailor made to fit those students.

## **2. Teachers know their subjects and how to teach those subjects to students.**

Knowing every single researcher or influential person in the educational field is not important, but knowing the big ideas in each discipline and how they relate to one another is important. Teachers must have a strong content knowledge and understand how subjects connect to one

another as well as how they connect to the real world. Lessons must be organized in a meaningful way and linked to other disciplines. Teachers must also master how to convey this knowledge to students. It is essential to take students background knowledge and preconceptions and use them in instruction. They plan ahead for where students will possibly struggle and make adjustments accordingly. Teachers know several methods to come to the same solution, encourage taking these different paths, and promote a learning environment where students discuss and share answers. Along with teaching content, teachers need to correct any misconceptions that students may have. It is also essential to incorporate higher order thinking skills in everyday practice and make time for students to show how they solved their problems and encourage alternative problem solving methods. Put instructional goals up, discuss them, and make students responsible for learning them.

**3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.** The learning environment must capture students' attention and effectively utilize all the given time. There is a time and place for individual and group teaching and learning. Teachers should not think of their classroom as isolated from others in the school, district, etc. Working with colleagues is an integral part of being a successful teacher. Outside people should also be used to educate students, such as parents, other colleagues, and administrators. Students should be engaged, individual goals met, social norms for interaction encouraged, and students motivated to learn. Multiple measurements of student growth should be incorporated to better understand student achievement and individual achievement should be clearly explained to parents and guardians. Teachers should utilize teachable moments. The learning environment is also important. Physical safety is a given but emotional and psychological safety is also important in creating an environment that is best suited for learning. Classroom management is key, and each



teacher has to find his/her own system that works for him/her. Teachers should know how students learn best.

**4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.**

Teachers have to continue their professional development. There are many options to do so: taking classes, reading research articles, attending conferences, or going through the National Board process. Most importantly, it has to be a continuous process. Everything a teacher does should impact student learning. Teachers should make conscious choices because what they choose to teach is crucial. It needs to contribute to the efforts of making them productive members of society. Teachers also need to learn from experience, whether that is one class period or one year. Teachers need to learn and grow constantly, and make it a priority to do so. When looking at student work, teachers should do it thoroughly and with a critical eye on their own teaching.

Teachers are educated people and they model that in their professional lives. They read, research, question, and are willing to try new things. They examine their practice on a regular basis and make changes that positively affect student achievement. They regularly deepen their knowledge, expand their repertoire of skills, stay abreast of current issues, and are familiar with learning theories and instructional strategies. They incorporate reflection into their daily practice and hold themselves to high moral standards.

**5. Teachers are members of learning communities.** NBCTs collaborate with one another and actively seek partnerships with community groups and businesses. They are leaders, evaluate school progress, and investigate the allocation of resources. They work together with parents to engage them productively in the school as well as work with other professionals on instructional policy, the development of the curriculum, and staff development. The quality of

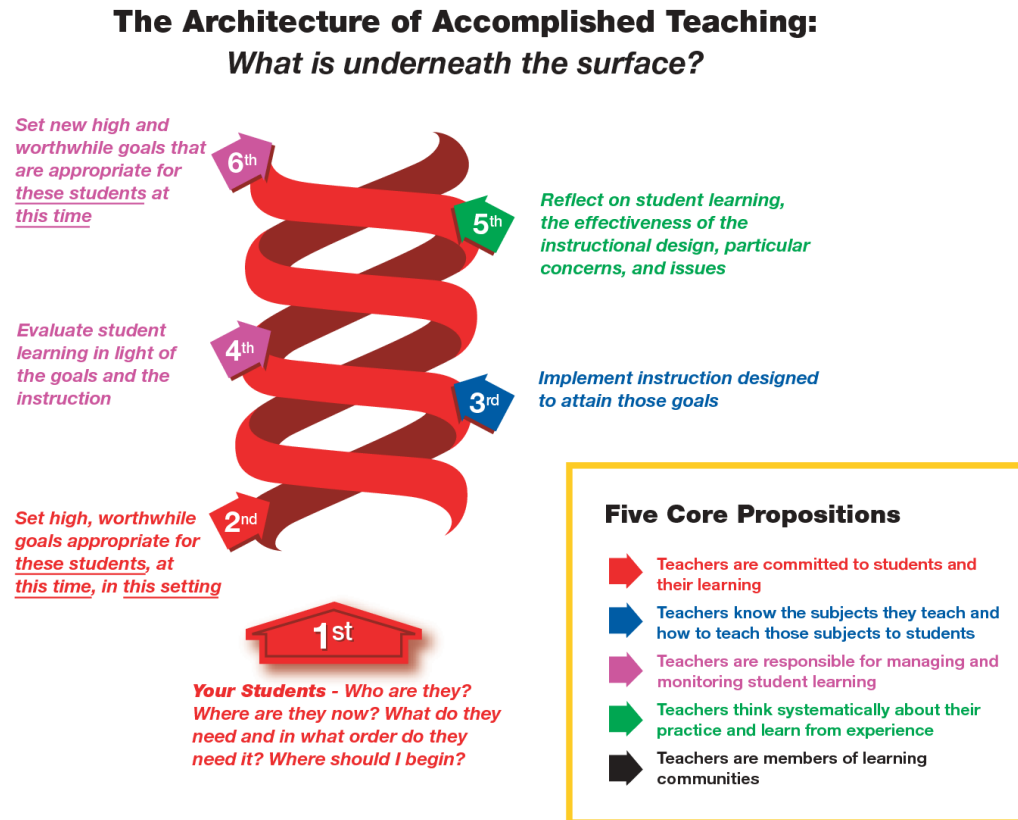
teaching has been found time and time again as the most important factor in a child's education. Great teachers understand that teaching extends beyond the classroom walls, and by working with other teachers, parents, administrators, and the community, practice improves. Students should be actively engaged in community service activities, service learning projects, sporting activities offered by the community, and other out of the classroom experiences. Field trips are another example of learning that takes place outside the classroom walls (Mack-Kirschner, 2003).

### **The Architecture of Accomplished Teaching**

The Architecture of Accomplished Teaching is a framework that shows how teachers can organize all the aspects of teaching. This design is based on the Five Core Propositions that are discussed above and it helps to illustrate how effective learning can occur as the pieces build upon each other. The NBPTS certification process is based upon this structure and the scores are looking for teachers to make connections between the different aspects of the helix shown below in Figure 1. The components of the helix are Knowledge of Students, Goal Setting, Planning/Teaching, Evaluation, Reflection, and finally New Goal Setting.

Figure 1

*Architecture Helix* ([http://www.phy.ilstu.edu/pte/Architecture3.professional developmentf](http://www.phy.ilstu.edu/pte/Architecture3.professional%20developmentf))



Teachers are first asked to show what they know about their students and how that affects what they do each day in their practice. Secondly, candidates are encouraged to goal set for their students based upon those particular students and their individual needs. Next, teachers must detail how they design and implement these goals in their classroom and evaluate student progress in light of these goals. Finally, teachers must be reflective in terms of their effectiveness and then set new goals that are current and appropriate for their students (NBPTS, 2013).

### Take One!

“Take One!” is a way for educators to sample the NB process by doing one of the four entries that is required for the full process. It is available to all teachers (even pre-service

teachers) as well as principals, professors, and anyone else in the field of education. Take One! does require that educators have access to a pre-K-12 classroom to complete the entry because it involves a video recording of classroom practices. As teachers complete the one video recorded entry, they not only have the chance to partake in a professional development and learning experience, but also begin the full NBPTS process if they choose to. Take One! lasts one school year, and educators can decide the following year if they would like to continue in the NB process by completing the other three required entries as well as the assessment center portion. The one required entry for Take One! is preselected for educators and asks candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of students, plan a lesson that meets the needs of the student, create a video recording of the lesson, and finally to reflect on that lesson.

### **Research on the National Board Process**

One of the initial problems in education when National Board certification began was that there seemed to be a disconnect between curriculum and implementation. Even though curriculum guidelines were given, implementation varied greatly in quality. Researchers knew that they had to get high quality teachers into the classroom before this gap would ever close. Rotberg, Futrell, and Lieberman (1998) did research on the National Board Certification process and deemed it effective based on student achievement. They knew that if this process was successful in identifying effective teachers, they wanted more teachers to complete the NB process. They feared for the impact of the program if few teachers were going through it and suggested to the NBPTS that it be better promoted to teachers. Luckily, the program gained more and more awareness year after year and as of spring 2013 approximately 100,000 teachers have passed certification.

Research on National Board certified teachers (NBCTs) falls mainly into five categories. The first category is the impact that NBCT's have on student achievement and learning. Much research shows that NBCTs have a positive impact on student achievement and enable their students to make greater gains throughout the year. The second category is the proven effectiveness of NBCTs. Going through the NB process changes teaching practices, improves professional development, and enables teachers to create stronger curricula and better pedagogy. Thirdly, NBCTs seem to make a huge impact in high needs schools. Almost half of all NBCTs teach in schools that are eligible for Title I funding and have a large majority of free/reduced lunch students (NBPTS, 2009). The fourth category addresses teacher retention. Much research emphasizes the fact that once teachers achieve National Board certification they are more apt to remain in the classroom as opposed to non NBCT's who leave the teaching profession. The last category is the recognition that is given to teachers who achieve NBCT status. Teachers are often given much praise and incentives once they achieve certification and are often offered leadership positions such as teacher mentors or curriculum coaches.

### **Better Credentials, Higher Student Achievement**

Let us first look at the suggestion that teachers with better credentials are more effective in the classroom. Many studies have compared teacher credentials (including but not limited to National Board Certification) to student achievement. Clotfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor (2007) looked at high school teachers in North Carolina while Bond, Smith, Baker, and Hattie (2000) looked at a variety of teachers in North Carolina. Both researchers found that the better the credentials, the better the teacher. Better credentials could mean a graduate degree, National Board Certification, greater number of years in the teaching profession, or other factors.

Bond et al. (2000) did one of the first research studies on NBCT's and their impact on student achievement. An interesting part of this study was that the teachers involved either went through the NB process and achieved it, or they went through the NB process and did not achieve. This made the study unique because most studies compare teachers who achieve NB certification to those who have never gone through the NB process. This study was based out of the University of North Carolina and not only looked at standardized test scores, but also looked at student work. The researchers looked at thirteen different dimensions of teaching expertise (knowledge of subject matter, ability to adapt/improvise instruction, creating innovative/engaging lessons, etc.) and noted that the NBCT's and their students scored higher than those who did not achieve NBC status. Eleven out of the thirteen dimensions showed statistically significant differences. Clotfelter et al. (2007) looked at a variety of test scores in multiple subjects to help minimize bias associated with the non-random distribution of teachers and students. Their results show a systematic effect between teacher credentials (years of experience, a teacher's test score, license type, certification in subject area, NBCT, graduate degree, and the quality of undergraduate institution) and impact on student achievement. Teachers do not need all of the credentials to have a greater impact, but the more credentials the teacher possesses, the better the impact on student achievement.

Cavalluzzo (2004) researched this same trend in mathematics. In a large urban school district, ninth and tenth grade math students were evaluated in hopes of finding out why some students made great gains within the year and why others did not. He took several credentials into consideration and the ones that seemed to correlate the closest with high student achievement were whether or not the teacher had a certification in the particular subject area they taught, if they had state certification in mathematics, and if they had been Nationally Board

Certified. Even though NB certification was not the only indicator that positively influenced student achievement, it was a significant one.

### **National Board Certification, Higher Student Achievement**

The above studies include a variety of factors that could be the reason that certain teachers are more effective in the classroom when compared to others. Maybe the more effective ones had graduate degrees or had been teaching longer, both of which have impacts on teachers and their practices. So does the National Board process create these highly effective teachers, or does the National Board process attract teachers who are already highly effective? Goldhaber and Anthony (2004) looked into this issue. They wanted to look at a group of teachers going through the NB process and get some information on their effectiveness before the results came in for certification. Their question stemmed from the fact that more and more teachers were becoming certified each year, and they wanted to see if in fact it was highly effective teachers who were becoming certified, or if certification was being awarded to teachers of varying levels. They found, through students' tests scores that the NB process is successfully identifying the more effective teachers among the candidates, based on students' standardized test scores. Another interesting finding was that prior to becoming certified those applicants who did achieve NB status were more effective than their non-certified counterparts.

Just one year later, Smith, Gordon, Colby, and Wang (2005) did a similar study to test for significant gains in student achievement. These researchers looked at NBCTs as well as a group of teachers who went through the NBC process but did not achieve certification. Sixty-four teachers were studied from all over the United States; thirty-five of the teachers were NBC and twenty-nine had attempted but did not achieve certification. The results were that the students

taught by NBCTs had made significant gains in achievement when compared to those teachers who did not achieve National Board status.

So does this trend continue? Do all students taught by NBCTs make greater gains when compared to students taught by non-NBCTs? Numerous studies have been done to investigate this question. Harris and Sass (2007) looked at all NBCTs in Florida and the standardized tests scores of their students. They compared this group to all the non-NBCTs in Florida and their students' test scores. They looked at data over a four-year time span and noticed a trend. NBCTs seemed to be an indicator of teacher productivity. Even though the results were not consistent over grade level and subjects, when taken as a whole, student gains were greater for NBCTs. This study also found that at some point in a NBCTs career they boost reading achievement more than non-NBCTs and the difference was statistically significant. Researchers also looked at specific cases where non-NBCTs showed significant student gains over the four-year span. Several of these teachers were found to be working closely with or were mentored by a NBCT.

Vandevoort, Amrein-Beardsley, and Berlinger (2004) also investigated this trend. Thirty five NBCTs who taught elementary school were compared to 14 non-NBCTs in terms of their students' achievement. This study took place in 14 different Arizona school districts, and the reading, math, and LA parts of the Stanford Achievement Tests, 9th Edition were used to analyze student achievement. Researchers looked at four different grade levels, four consecutive years of data, and the three different subject area tests. The results showed that students in the classes of NBCTs surpassed students in the classrooms of the non-NBCTs in three-fourths of the comparisons. One-third of those comparisons were noted as statistically significant. No statistically significant gains were indicated for non-NBCTs. To relate these gains in terms of



academic progress, the NBCT students gained about one month's more knowledge per year compared to the non-NBCT's students.

Cantrell, Fullerton, Kane, and Staiger (2008) built on previous research and did a unique study to see if students of NBCTs made greater gains in academic achievement, and he put much effort into NBC being the deciding factor of the student growth. They created 99 pairs of teachers where one teacher was a NBCT and the other was not. Each pair of teachers taught in the same school and at the same grade level and were closely matched based on other characteristics that would greatly influence student achievement. They tried to match each pair based on similar years of experience, subject area, and whether or not they had graduate degrees. This study took place in Los Angeles, using the test scores in language arts and mathematics, and the classes ranged from 3rd to 5th grade. Students were either randomly or non-randomly assigned to the teachers. The study that happened over a two-year time span found that for both randomly assigned teachers and non-randomly assigned ones, NBCTs were more effective in the classroom compared to the non-NBCT partner.

Given the research discussed, it seems that NBCTs are effective in pushing their students to the next level and producing academic gains. Why is this? Is it because NBCTs understand the learning process and know how to tailor their lessons to best fit their students? Or because they have at least three years of classroom experience and the reflective NB process allowed them time to reflect on those years and improve their practice? One could argue that effective teachers are the ones most likely to try for the accreditation, or possibly that the teachers who complete the NB process are already committed to remaining in the field and wanting to make a difference in student achievement. Whatever the reason may be, research shows that NBCTs are effective in their classrooms and push students to make significant gains in their learning.

## **Develops Effective Teachers**

Prior to the NB process, effective teachers were identified primarily through administrative evaluations. What is it about NBCTs that make them more effective in the classroom? There are a variety of answers to this question, and it is probably different for every NBCT. Some are natural leaders, some understand how to effectively use assessment to drive instruction, and others may deeply understand the learning process and know how to best reach all students. Many studies have been done on what makes NBCTs more effective, and as mentioned above, it seems to be a multifaceted answer.

Lustick and Sykes (2006) researched the question “What are teachers learning from going through the NBC process?” One hundred twenty NB candidates all in the same certification area (Adolescent and Young Adult Science) were studied as they went through the NBC process. They were followed for two years using the recurrent institutional cycle research design. Researchers used cross-sectional and longitudinal data so that they could collect data regarding individual growth as well as data across group means. Researchers interviewed the teacher candidates and had those interviews scored by several assessors. The assessors were looking for the 13 NBPTS standards that suggest accomplished science teaching. Researchers used this data as their quantitative evidence of teacher learning. The study showed that candidates understanding of science teaching had increased, with greatest gains in scientific inquiry and assessment. They concluded that the NB process is an effective and useful professional learning opportunity.

A different study was done by Sato, Wei, and Darling-Hammond (2008) and looked at how teachers assessed their students before the NB process and after completion. Researchers used a comparison group design (the comparison group of teachers were interested in pursuing

NBC but postponed it until the study was completed) and the study took place over the course of three years. The three years consisted of one year prior to candidacy, one year of candidacy, and one year following. All teachers were middle school or high school teachers, with either math or science concentrations. Six dimensions of formative assessment were used and put into a rubric. The average teacher's years of experience was between nine and eleven years and data collection included videotapes, written responses, student work samples, and teacher surveys. Participants were paid a stipend. Findings show that formative assessment practices for NB candidates increased throughout the NB process, with significantly greater gains than those by the non-NB group. Students' test scores went up for the NB group while the non-NB group remained relatively constant. NB teachers were rated more favorably during their second and third years than the other group. In summary, NB candidates shifted from a focus on grading to a focus on assessment for formative purposes.

Yankelovich (2001) investigated whether or not NBCTs take on leadership roles in their schools. He found that not only did all NBCTs in this study have at least one leadership role, they took on numerous leadership roles in one school year. On average, one NBCT took on approximately ten leadership activities over the course of one school year. These activities include speaking at meetings or conferences, being part of a curriculum team, mentoring novice teachers, coaching a sporting team or academic team, being a content chair or team leader, or working in a similar activity to improve the quality of their teaching and/or student learning. When these teacher leaders were interviewed, Yankelovich discovered that 89% of them felt their leadership activities made them more effective teachers. Ninety-two percent of them stated that the NB process made them better teachers and equipped them with better curricula to implement in the classroom as well as stronger pedagogical skills.

If the National Board process certifies effective teachers who are making significant gains in student achievement, why are colleges not restructuring their graduate programs to incorporate components of the NB process? Some are. Buday and Kelly (1996) conducted a study ten years ago and found that some colleges were turning their graduate program, or part of it, into something similar to the National Board process. They required students to video tape themselves teaching and share it with the class for discussion. They are also asked graduate students to bring in work samples from their students for a detailed analysis. Little research has been done since 1996 in terms of whether colleges still have these requirements or not, although since 2014, 27 states have adopted the edTPA as a summative assessment for initial licensure. This process parallels the National Board process, so these teacher education programs need to support teacher candidates through a process similar to NBs. It will be interesting to then study the results of these kinds of changes in teacher education programs.

Park et al. (2007) found that the NB process enhances reflection on teaching practice, establishes a professional discourse among teachers, raises the standards for teaching performance, and facilitates collaboration. Regardless of what subject area, level, or school or district, there seems to be growing research validation that going through the NB process is a way to improve practice.

### **Makes a Difference in High-Needs Schools**

The research discussed above shows that NBCTs are not only effective in the classroom, but they also help students make gains in terms of academic achievement. If this is the case, should these teachers be working with some of the nation's most needy students? Many people believe they should. In 2008, NBPTS made a push to expand credentialing in high need parts of the country. The Board's Targeted High Need Initiative Comprehensive Candidate Support

Centers were created to give resources (financial and professional) to teachers in a handful of high need schools to encourage them to become NB certified. Not only will they provide financial aid in the beginning of the NB process, but will also be provided mentor support throughout the NB process. Mentoring is done by putting NB candidates into groups based on location and providing a NBCT leader for the groups. The purpose is to get more high needs teachers certified so that it will help close the achievement gap that is prevalent in high needs schools.

Even before this initiative, Chicago Public Schools rose to the challenge of certifying teachers in high needs schools. Chicago's goal was to improve teacher quality on a district wide scale and to keep those teachers in the district. They set the goal in 2000 to have 1200 NBCTs in the district and they met that goal in 2008. This growth has been largely the result of a longstanding partnership between the Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Teacher's Union, the Mayor's office, and The Chicago Public Education Fund. Chicago's school district had an issue with teachers leaving for the suburbs, and that is what they wanted to prevent. They put more than six million dollars into the NB process (50 million dollars total for the reform) because they knew having these influential teachers was the best way to bring about positive change.

Since this reform initiative, student performance is improving, NBCTs are staying in the system, they are spread out throughout the district, they are working in high needs schools with diverse students, and they take leadership roles. Half of all the schools in the district have at least one NBCT, and those teachers seem to be leading the school reform. These teachers push the reform, encourage reflection, are leaders, and aid other teachers in going through the NB process (NBPTS, 2009).

District leaders continue to promote the NB process because they believe that teacher quality is the single most important factor in student achievement. They also know the importance of having a “critical mass” of NBCTs in each school; they are often the driving force of learning communities or professional development options. The district is continuing to offer rewards up to \$4000 per year for some teachers. Currently they have been able to retain 90% of all NBCTs within the district. This study (NBPTS, 2009) did not mention if these teachers have been retained in classroom positions, or as district curriculum coordinators, instructional coaches, or other non-classroom positions.

Some districts are more willing than others to put up money to support the NB process. Some provide support groups or cohorts for teachers going through the NB process and are paying for a NBCT to lead the group. Many provide annual bonuses for teachers who certify and/or move them up the pay scale.

### **Improves Teacher Retention**

Teacher retention related to NBC teachers typically refers to teachers who are more likely to stay in the teaching profession. This could mean that they move schools, districts, move to a different state, or even take a position at a different level such as a community college or a university. The research shows that teachers who achieve NB certification are more likely to remain in the teaching profession.

In Florida, for example, nearly 90% of NBCTs remain in teaching—which far exceeds the average 60% retention rate for all teachers statewide (Florida Department of Education, 2008). In Ohio, 52% of NBCTs surveyed said they plan to stay in teaching as long as they can, compared to 38% of non-Board certified teachers in the state. Many other states have similar results.

Lambert (2006) writes about a study done by the National Education Association where they found that half of new U.S. teachers are likely to quit within the first five years of their career. The study found that this is mostly due to poor working conditions and low salaries. Teacher salaries are often not enough to cover the cost of student loans, child care, and other expenses and dealing with the school bureaucracy is another problematic issue. "We must face the fact that although our current teachers are the most educated and most experienced ever, there are still too many teachers leaving the profession too early, not enough people becoming teachers and not enough diversity in the profession," NEA President Reg Weaver said in a statement (Lambert, 2006).

The reason that NBCTs stay in teaching might be easily explained. To apply for NBC a teacher must have at least three years of experience and most applicants have more than this. If a teacher has already made it to the five-year mark, they have a much greater chance in staying in the profession when compared to teachers who are just starting their career. In addition, teachers applying for NBC are likely those confident in their practice and who probably plan to stay in education. It does not seem likely that a teacher would complete all the work of certification just to quit a year or so down the road.

In a study done in 2006, Sykes, Anagnostopoulos, Cannata, Chard, Frank, McCrory, and Wolfe reported that NBCTs reported that they planned on staying in the teaching field for a good amount of time, so offering incentives was considered an investment in teacher quality and well worth the time and money. NBCTs see themselves as having influence and impact in their schools. They also have plans to make influences outside the school, maybe changing district or state policy. NBCTs want to remain in their classrooms, but expand their influence to a broader

community. Another finding is that NBC has influence outside those who complete the NB process, carrying over to other teachers in the building.

### **Skilled Teachers and Teacher Leaders**

NBCTs have been shown to create more challenging curricula, demonstrate in-depth knowledge of teaching skills and subject matter, provide better feedback to students, and routinely seek educational strategies that better meet students' needs (Baker & Hattie, 2000). NBCTs give input on curricular decisions, organize professional development opportunities, chair departments, engage with the community, reach out to parents, and serve as faculty voices to policymakers and other stakeholders (Lustick & Sykes, 2006). NBCTs take on leadership roles that include mentoring and coaching others and developing programs aimed at improving student learning (Yankelovich, 2001).

### **Not So Positive Research on the NBPTS**

Freund, Russell, and Kavulic (2005) did a study to investigate whether or not the National Board process leads to higher quality teaching or if high-quality teachers are attracted to the certification process. To clarify, all three of these researchers agreed that the NB process identifies strong teachers, which is the goal of NBPTS. They were questioning whether or not the NB process creates highly effective teachers, or whether the teachers were already highly effective beforehand. The NBPTS never claimed that they could take ineffective teachers and turn them into effective practitioners. The mission statement does say that they "provide a national voluntary system certifying teachers who meet these standards," referring to the standards put forth by the organization. This suggests that teachers need to already have a highly effective practice before they try to obtain certification. McColskey and Strange (2005) reported that NB applicants pursue post-Master's coursework at higher rates and have higher reading



comprehension scores when compared to a group of non-NBC candidates. So the NB process does seem to attract highly qualified teachers, and even though it may not create them, it is successful at identifying them.

Many teachers begin the NB process and either do not finish or do not achieve National Board status after completing all the work involved. Some will say that those teachers wasted their time and possibly their money, in addition to any wasted money that was given by the school district or the state. Kellie Hayden (2007) would agree that one of the cons for going through the NB process is that a teacher may not achieve certification, but she also argues that the NB process itself is worthwhile whether you achieve or not. For those teachers who begin the NB process and do not finish, they may learn something along the way. It is possible they became more reflective, or learned that at this time in their lives they are not ready to make the commitment, or learned what the NB process is about and may make it a goal for the future. Unfortunately, this sometimes results in a loss of confidence for these teachers as well as embarrassment. For those teachers who apply, complete the work, but never achieve certification, they too have learned how intense the NB process is.

Some find it hard to argue that spending hundreds of hours reflecting on your teaching practice is a waste of time, especially those who view the NB process as an accreditation process and not as a professional development opportunity. Others claim that through the NB process, teachers learn more about their practice, evaluate what works and what does not, and critically think about what impacts student achievement.

Some critics claim that teachers really are not intrinsically motivated; they just complete the NB process for the monetary incentives. They also worry that if budget cuts are made, these teachers will not be getting their stipend or extra salary bonus and that may cause hostility by

teachers and NBPTS leaders. There is also evidence that some teachers are less effective while in the NB process of becoming certified because they neglect their teaching because of the demands of preparing the NBPTS portfolio (Goldhaber & Anthony 2004; Harris and Sass, 2007). If this claim is valid, it may not be worthwhile for some teachers to attempt certification.

Freund et al. (2005) state that board certified teachers tend to change teaching jobs at a higher rate than non-board certified teachers and they tend to move to more advantaged schools. Goldhaber and Hanson (2007) reported similar findings in terms of mobility and say “the NBPTS credential is a sign of teacher quality, it is not surprising that NBCTs may be able to leverage this credential to secure more favorable teaching assignments.” They suggest that state or local policy makers provide greater incentives for NBCTs to work at disadvantaged schools and lesser incentives for them to work at affluent, high achieving schools. California, for example, has a setup where teachers can earn up to \$20,000 more per year to teach in low-performing schools (Humphrey, Koppich & Hough, 2005).

Freund et al. (2005) suggested that some parts of the NB process need to be further studied. For example, it is clear in the data that even though Black teachers are just as likely to apply as White teachers (proportionally to the population), they do not pass at the same rate, suggesting some racial biases in the scoring process. Furthermore, this may suggest that the process privileges White teachers either by rhetoric, teaching style, or some other component of the process. Also, sometimes administrators do not support candidates and downplay the importance of NBC. These are valid points to make and if true, NBPTS should do research on these concerns.

Some concern was evident when a study came out showing that NBCTs did not actually make greater academic gains when compared to non-NBCTs. Stone (2002) looked at sixteen NB

certified teachers in Tennessee in grades 3 through 8 and the test scores of their students over a three year time span. He looked at academic gains of these teachers compared to non-NBCTs. The results showed that they were not more effective; their results were remarkably similar to the non-NBCTs in that group. This study was controversial, mainly because it was one of the first and biggest to find evidence not supporting higher student achievement for NBPTS. It is important to note however, that while they found NBCTs not to be any more effective than non-NBCTs, they did not find that NBCTs were less effective than non-NBCTs. In addition, the study may have been done in a school where there were excellent teachers who had not yet gone through the NB process or had no desire to apply, and yet were still excellent teachers.

Sanders, Ashton, and Wright (2005) conducted a similar study with similar results. This study was done in North Carolina and four different models were used to measure academic achievement. Researchers, using value added analysis, looked at end of the year exams given to fourth through eighth graders in both reading and math. The findings of the study suggested that students of NBCTs did not have statistically significant better rates of academic achievement than those of any of the other groups of teachers. The most important finding was that students taught by NBCTs varied greatly in their rates of academic achievement. This suggests that some NBCTs are more effective than others, even though all of them were certified. These variances were more significant than those found between NBCTs and non-NBCTs. The significance of studies like these, in comparison to those reported earlier, is that even within a group of NBCTs, gains in student achievement can still vary.

What does NBPTS say about their critics? In a letter addressing the critics, President and CEO of the NBPTS, Dr. Joseph Aguerrebere wrote in 2007:

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has always welcomed scrutiny of the National Board Certification process and the impact that National Board

Certified Teachers have on teaching and learning. As a result, in the 20 years since NBPTS was founded, National Board Certification has become one of the most heavily researched areas in the teaching field. Scores of studies, research projects, and other reports have reviewed and evaluated various aspects of National Board Certification. These efforts have covered such areas as the impact of National Board Certification on student performance, the influence of the NB process on teacher retention, and the quality of assignments planned by National Board Certified Teachers. This report provides summaries of dozens of these studies.

We are pleased to note that most of this research finds that NBCTs and the related certification process have positive impacts overall on teaching quality and student achievement. The research also notes that many teachers who become National Board Certified also become mentors, teacher trainers, and instructional leaders, and assume other leadership positions in their schools. These results, we believe, underscore the added value that results from even one National Board Certified Teacher in a school.

We have learned a great deal from this research — not all of which is positive. For example, researchers find that National Board Certified Teachers are less likely to work in low-income schools than in more affluent schools. African American and Hispanic teachers are less likely to earn the certification than their white and Asian counterparts. School administrators do not always recognize the value of National Board Certified Teachers, thus often failing to use them strategically in ways that could raise student achievement, benefit other teachers, and influence school-wide reform. NBPTS is drawing on these findings to bolster the National Board Certification process, address underrepresentation of minority candidates, and create programs to enhance the presence of NBCTs in all schools, especially in high-need schools.

We believe this report makes the case that National Board Certification is playing an important role in raising the quality of our nation's teaching force and classroom instruction. We look forward to using this information and the findings of future research to improve and expand the influence of National Board Certified Teachers, the certification process, and the overall work of the National Board ([www.nbpts.org](http://www.nbpts.org)).

## **Summary**

Many teachers see National Board Certification as the ultimate achievement to strive for during their career (Buday & Kelly, 1996). Becoming Nationally Board Certified must be worthwhile or prestigious, or teachers would not continue to choose to spend thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours to complete the requirements. NBPTS argues that they have identified effective teachers, rewarded those teachers, and often motivated them to take on leadership roles and encourage other teachers to complete the NB process. Application rates, as

well as passing scores, are rising each year, and more and more teachers and students are benefiting from the NB process.

The complexity of issues surrounding NBPTS is evident. If it does not create better teachers, only attracts them, is it truly a professional development opportunity? Or is it just a certification process? If so, then the teachers who did not pass may have wasted their time and money. If it is a professional development opportunity, then those who do not pass or complete the NB process may still gain knowledge from their attempt. Proponents of the NB process want it to be both a professional development process for teachers as well as certification for excellent teachers. They want to identify the best teachers, but for those who do not pass they want to claim that it is still a worthwhile professional development process. This claim has intrigued many in the field.

More research needs to be done on who goes through this process and their motivating factors. Research may answer some of the questions about which types of teachers are more likely to pass/fail and whether obtaining a better teaching assignment is a common goal for candidates. Last, if students suffer while teachers complete this process, these effects need to be studied and weighed against the positive outcomes of the NB process for teachers.

### **Critical Analysis of NBPTS as a Form of Professional Development**

It is important to look critically at the NBPTS to discuss whether or not it is an effective form of professional development. Detailed above are the aspects of professional development that make the NB process meaningful to teachers as reported in the research, so comparing those against the NB process will provide a clearer picture of the NB process.

## **NBPTS vs. Effective Components of Professional Development**

The NB process has numerous components. The following section takes each of the components and compares them against the previously detailed components of effective professional development.

**Linked to and supported by reform efforts.** One of the goals of the NBPTS is to take NBCTs and prepare them to contribute to reform efforts. They believe that the NB process identifies teacher leaders, and once identified, these teachers can be positively used for their expertise in the teaching field. Many districts, during reform, are calling teacher leaders (NBCTs, content area chairs, etc.) to step up and use their knowledge and skills to make positive improvements towards reform efforts (NBPTS, 2012).

Raising student achievement is commonly seen as a reform effort in many districts across the country. Stigler and Hiebert (1999) stated that many educators believe that student achievement is the primary purpose of teaching, and that the NB process directs teachers' attention toward student learning, thus having a positive impact. Other researchers find that the NB process teaches teachers how to be more purposeful in their planning, develop better questioning techniques, and create more meaningful assessment tools, all in turn leading to higher student achievement (Bohen, 2001). Numerous studies (detailed previously), although not all, show that NBC teachers' students outperform those of non-NBCTs. Higher performing students are not only better prepared for college, but they help raise graduation rates among districts. The NBPTS standards provide high expectations for all teachers and consequently may help to alleviate the achievement gaps that exist. The NB process makes teachers look at every child as an individual, each with unique needs, allowing teachers to make better decisions about their instruction.

Many districts' reform efforts are geared towards more successful ways to evaluate teacher effectiveness. New legislation requires some districts to include student data in teachers' evaluations, so districts are working to develop new systems that better measure teacher effectiveness. Some districts are incorporating components such as community relations, professional growth, parent communication, content collaboration, and proof of differentiation in these evaluations, which are components also found in the NB process. For example, Comprehensive School Reform, or CSR, is an effort to improve school districts from top to bottom, to do a complete overhaul. Over 5,000 schools are receiving funds to do this and the reform includes elements such as: professional development for all staff, an increase in community involvement, measurable goals for student achievement, and an evaluation that includes student achievement results (Education Week, 2004). These are all aspects that the NBPTS has asked teachers to show in their practice as well. An effective process to identify effective teachers is the goal of many school districts, and the NBPTS has already developed a process to do that.

According to a study from the National Education Association (2006), a teachers union, half of new U.S. teachers are likely to quit within the first five years because of poor working conditions and low salaries. Because of this, a focus of many districts is teacher retention and NBCTs are known to stay in the education field longer than non-NBCTs. In the NBPTS (2009) study of Chicago Public Schools they found that nine out of ten NBCTs remain in the district that is much higher than comparable urban districts. It could be, however, that the teachers who choose to apply for NBC are teachers that were already intending to stay in teaching.

In summary, the NBPTS could fit into a variety of reform efforts including but not limited to those that deal with raising student achievement, developing effective ways to evaluate

teachers, and increasing teacher retention. Because this process fits in with reform efforts, teachers not only see themselves strengthening their practice, but also help to support the improvement of the school/district.

**A collaborative process.** The NBPTS (2012) recognizes (but does not formally endorse) the value of teachers working in cohorts to help candidates be successful in the certification process. They claim that it is possible to achieve certification without participating in a support group, but they have had numerous candidates claim that the support groups are vital. The reasons for this are similar to what has already been discussed in regards to the benefits of collegial support. Colleagues keep candidates focused and motivated, enhance teaching practices, and can assist with decisions made in the classroom in terms of instructional choices. Specific to the NB process, collegial support is helpful in videotaping classroom lessons, looking at writing samples, and helping to clarify the directions on the required entries. Some states offer state subsidized administrators, candidates can find NBCT networks online, and many state and local teacher associations provide candidate support as well. Strong professional communities can initiate change in numerous teaching practices which in turn lead to improved learning experiences for students (Lynn, 1994; Scribner & Hager, 2000).

As mentioned previously, Park et al. (2007) conducted a study asking teachers how important their colleagues were while they were going through the NB process. They summarize their findings by saying, “It is clear that the NBC process itself is a forceful professional development experience and colleague teachers play an important role in how candidates get involved in and complete the NB process” (p. 369). They also found that this collegiality had long-lasting results especially when the teachers work together in the same school, department,



or if they teach the same group of students. Colleagues helped candidates put the focus on student learning, not on what teachers do in the classroom.

What is it about collegiality/collaboration that makes it so powerful? Van Driel, Beijaard, and Verloop (2001) found that teachers improved their confidence, valued their own practice at a higher level, were more willing to experiment with ideas within their classroom, and learned to appreciate a community of discourse. Park et al. (2007) found that the NB process enhanced teachers' reflections, established professional communities centered on discourse, raised expectations for teaching, and facilitated collaboration. McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) are supporters of professional communities where teachers share responsibility for student success and improve practice to deepen student learning, and that is exactly what the NBPTS does.

To summarize, teachers going through the NB process have some flexibility in terms of how much collegial interaction they have. Some complete the NB process completely on their own, reflecting on their practice individually, while others appreciate the benefits that a cohort of educators can provide. Those benefits are emotional support, motivation, mentoring, similar understanding of the NB process, collaborations, discourse, and assisting with observations and writing (Park et al., 2007).

**A continuous process.** When candidates sign up for the NB process, they have three years to write and rewrite the entries in an attempt to achieve a high enough score to gain certification. If teachers achieve certification, the license is good for 10 years and then they must renew by going through a similar process to show their effectiveness as a teacher. While the NB process does have a set amount of time, the skills teachers learn while going through the NB process are ones that they can continue to use over the course of their career. To achieve certification, candidates must show mastery of the standards, demonstrate their reflective nature

as an educator, and provide evidence of student learning. Many researchers believe that good professional development models should be set up in a very similar fashion; focused, inquiry-based, and lasting for an extended period of time (Ashburn, 1995).

To provide an example, the standards to achieve certification in mathematics are: commitment to math learning of all students, knowledge of the math content, knowledge of students, knowledge of the teaching practice, creating a positive learning environment, varying ways of thinking mathematically, effective assessment, reflection and growth as an educator, relations with families and the community, and professional development (NBPTS, 2012). As candidates focus on these standards, concentrate on them while they are planning and teaching, and write up how their practice fits into these standards, they are attempting to improve the quality of their teaching as well as hoping to learn a more effective way to teach.

Coskie and Place (2008) investigated whether modifications were made to teaching practices during the years that candidates were going through the NB process. They claim that the integration of the NB standards were very apparent while teachers were going through the NB process, especially in regards to students with special needs, and those efforts were even carried out the year after the NB process was complete. They also claim that all of the teachers in the study “became more purposeful about their practice after participating in the National Board process.” One teacher noted that the National Board process provided a framework for thinking” (Coskie & Place, 2008, p. 1900) that she could use in years to come when planning and teaching her students.

In summary, numerous educational researchers claim that the best way to learn both content and pedagogical knowledge is over a sustained period of time. The NBPTS provides that opportunity for teachers, they just have to use the skills learned during the NB process and

continue their use in years to come. “The use of terms like ‘deepening,’ ‘refining,’ and ‘extending’ to frame these tasks implies that learning to teach involves continuing growth and development in core aspects of teaching” (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1048).

**A focus on content and pedagogical knowledge.** As discussed earlier in the paper, it is important for teachers to have strong knowledge of the content they are teaching (content knowledge) as well as a deep understanding of how to teach those concepts (procedural knowledge). Shulman (1987) argues that both are necessary for teachers to be effective in the classroom, making a case for strong Pedagogic Content Knowledge (PCK). Many professional development opportunities offered to teachers focus on a new teaching strategy, or a new program being implemented, but rarely help teachers better understand the content they teach (Hassel, 1999). The NBPTS has broader goals, requiring candidates to document their teaching practices for an entire year, reflect on their professional development for the last five years, evaluate student work samples, and take six assessment center exercises that test candidates’ content knowledge of the subject area they teach (NBPTS, 2013). Essentially, the NB process is similar to an independent study form of professional development.

NBPTS tests teachers on their pedagogical knowledge through four written entries. The first is a classroom-based entry that has candidates look at student work and reflect upon the next steps to take in terms of their teaching practices. Next are two classroom-based entries that require teachers to video record their teaching, capturing real life interactions between the teacher and the students. The last entry asks candidates to document their professional development, accomplishments, community relations, and how all of these aspects outside of teaching positively affect student achievement (NBPTS, 2012). Numerous researchers believe that it is essential for teachers to be able to teach their content in the most effective way possible (Wilson,

Shulman, and Richert, 1987). This means teachers must be able to identify what might be confusing for kids before they teach it, having multiple explanations readily available during a lesson, making cross curricular connections between subject areas, providing analogies for students to better understand material, and connecting concepts to their lives. These are the same aspects of teaching that the NBPTS scoring center evaluators are looking for in candidates writing.

A unique feature of the NB process is that teachers must show through their writing a very deep understanding of their students, their needs, and the individual characteristics that make them each unique. For teachers to best understand pedagogical knowledge, they must know how their students learn best. Students develop at different age levels, change drastically over the course of a year, and each have unique learning preferences based on their culture, language, home life, etc. (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). NBPTS asks candidates to reveal their knowledge of students in each of the four portfolio entries and show how that drives their pedagogical practices.

The six assessment center exercises assess teachers' content knowledge in the subject that they teach. The NBPTS believes, similar to numerous other educational researchers, that teachers should spend time studying their content knowledge and be tested on their deep understanding of that content in order to be deemed an effective teacher. Educational researchers have noted three aspects of content knowledge that are important for teachers to understand to be effective in the classroom. They are (a) knowledge of facts, theories, and procedures, (b) knowledge of frameworks that connect ideas, and (c) knowledge of the rules of evidence and proof (Shulman, 1986). NBPTS addresses all of these content knowledge standards with their assessment

practices because they ask teachers to demonstrate content knowledge, to connect that knowledge to other disciplines, and present that content in multiple ways to students.

Feiman-Nemser (2001) states her views on the context of practice:

Knowledge for training cannot remain in separate domains if it is going to be usable in practice. An important part of learning to teach involves transforming different kinds of knowledge into a flexible, evolving set of commitments, understanding, and skills. Some knowledge can best be gained at the university, but much of what teachers need to know can only be learned in the context of practice. (p. 1048)

The NBPTS sets teachers up to learn in the context of their practice; learning about their teaching as well as the content they teach, all while doing it in a meaningful setting.

**Discussion.** Desimone (2011) claims that effective professional development has an ongoing evaluative tool, changes are consistently made to the NB process to make improvements, and that teachers are held responsible/accountable for their learning. Scribner (1999) encourages professional development to vary in different settings, depending on the needs of the teachers and students. Ross-Gordon (2011) argues that adults learn best when the context is meaningful, prior knowledge is utilized, collaboration is encouraged, and when student learning is observed. The NBPTS meets all of these requirements for a high quality professional development process. Andrea Peterson, USA National Teacher of the Year 2007, describes the NB process as “the single most transforming professional development experience of my career” (Coskie & Place, 2008, para. 5).

In summary, the purpose of educational professional development is to provide an opportunity for teachers to learn more about their field and be prepared to teach the diverse populations that are ever-present in the U.S. educational system. In order for these opportunities

to be effective they must be linked to a reform effort, they must be collaborative and continuous, and must focus on both content and pedagogical knowledge. There are numerous professional development opportunities available to teachers, and included on the list is the NB process. The NBPTS has some supporting research that suggests it raises student achievement, identifies effective teachers, improves teacher retention, and recognizes skilled teacher leaders whom are often found in some of the most high needs schools. Critics of the NB process suggest it only recognizes effective teachers and that it does not create them, large amounts of time and money are spent of the NB process that may not be worth the outcome, teachers' motivation is questionable, there are racial biases, NBCTs often change jobs frequently, and students suffer while teachers are going through this process. Despite these critiques, the NBPTS as well as numerous other educators believe that they have a process that effectively identifies high quality teachers and gives them the tools to continue their effective practice for years to come (Childers-Burpo, 2002; Chittenden & Jones, 1997; Mosely & Rains, 2002).

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

One of the critiques of the NBPTS is that teachers are primarily extrinsically, rather than intrinsically, motivated to complete the NB process. More specifically, teachers complete the NB process for the monetary benefits, the recognition, the transferability of the certificate, and the prestige as opposed to wanting to improve student learning and become a better practitioner. Unfortunately, there is not much research on teachers' motivation to complete the NB process so this claim cannot be validated or rejected. There are numerous forms of professional development that can be meaningful to teachers. The National Board Certification process is just one choice of many and researching why teachers choose to complete this process could prove to be useful knowledge in the field of education.

This study is a qualitative study, focused on people and their life experiences. For this study, the primary data collected were individual interviews and one focus group session. The purpose of these interviews was to gather teachers' life experiences, understand how teachers experience their world within a naturalistic setting, and to use those experiences to better understand teachers' motivations to complete the National Board Certification process.

The two primary research questions for this study were:

1. What motivates teachers to complete the National Board process?
2. What benefits and burdens do they face by going through the requirements?

### **Background of the Study**

The goal of the NBPTS organization is to “establish advanced standards for experienced teachers” (National Board for Professional Standards, 1994, p. 1). The NB process to become certified is an optional accreditation that follows state certification. It is intended for experienced

teachers who are ready to evaluate their current practice, reflect on their teaching, and make positive and lasting changes that raise student achievement and increase student learning. Once teachers complete the National Board process, they may have an interesting story to tell about their motivations, benefits, and burdens of going through the NB process. By learning more about these teachers' experiences, other teachers and administrators can assess the value and challenges of this type of certification process.

The purpose of this study was to interview teachers who completed the NB process and ask them about their motivation, the benefits (if any) they gained, and the burdens (if any) they faced. I remained open to teachers with different views and perspectives on the NB process, and realized that just because I had a positive experience does not necessarily mean that everyone experienced the NB process in the same way.

### **The Qualitative Interview**

Qualitative interviewing is a data-gathering tool originally used in ethnographic research, which is a systematic study of a group of people (Charmaz, 2006). Interviewing can be compared to a detective story where the researcher is trying to find out what others think and feel about their own worlds. Using interviews was appropriate for this study because it focused on NBCTs and their meaning making about life experiences related to the NB process. It provided the researcher with a chance to have face-to-face discussions with NBCTs and allowed them a chance to tell their stories. The qualitative interview was most appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to gain insights into their personal experiences and explore their understandings; the purpose was not toward making generalizations.



### **Researcher Stance**

During the 2009-2010 school year, I went through the National Board Certification process during my sixth year of teaching. I found the NB process to be the most beneficial professional development I have encountered, even to this day three years later. I was certified in the fall of 2010. Because of my positive experience, I decided to learn more about fellow teachers who have completed the NB process, what motivated them to do so, what benefits they gained and the burdens they experienced. I was curious to know if they had similar experiences, or if they had negative experiences that I did not face, and/or if they had similar or different motivations and professional development experiences.

Some of my challenges in doing this research was the fact that I had such a positive experience with the NB process and believe it to be a beneficial and positive process that I expected others to also feel positive. I needed to continually reflect on this bias and not let it affect my interviews or my data analysis. I tried to be reflective and not influence others when they were sharing their experiences and stories. I tried to keep an open mind that everyone may not have had such a positive experience, and, that regardless of their experiences, each story is important and meaningful in my research. While I interviewed a relatively small number of teachers (12), I attempted to insure that these were in depth conversations by spending adequate time with each interviewee and attempting to form a relationship with each participant using our commonalities as NBCTs.

### **Participants**

The participants of this study included nine locally based NBCTs, my own story as one of the nine cases, as well as three teachers who went through the NB process but did not achieve certification. I collected data on my own participation by typing answers to the interview

questions prior to doing the other interviews and have indicated my contributions to the study throughout. A short biography of each participant at the time of the interview is listed below:

- Participant 1 is a middle level physical education teacher who began her career in 2008, attempted the NBPTS certification process in 2012, and is still currently teaching.
- Participant 2 is a former high school horticulture teacher who began his career in 2001, certified in 2008, and left the classroom that same year to pursue graduate school.
- Participant 3 is a sixth grade mathematics teacher who began her career in 1986, attempted the NBPTS certification process in 2009, and is still currently teaching.
- Participant 4 is a former elementary teacher who began her career in 2002, certified in 2007, and left the classroom in 2010 to pursue graduate school.
- Participant 5 is a middle level special education teacher who began her career in 2000, certified in 2010, and is still currently teaching.
- Participant 6 is a middle level ELA teacher who began her teaching career in 2002, certified in 2010, and is still currently teaching.
- Participant 7 is a former first grade teacher who began her career in 1977, certified in 1998, renewed in 2007, and retired in 2013.
- Participant 8 (this is my case) is a sixth grade math teacher who began her teaching career in 2006, certified in 2010, and is still currently teaching.
- Participant 9 is a former elementary school teacher, is now an instructional coach, who started her career in 1988, certified in 2006, and is still currently teaching.
- Participant 10 is a high school art teacher who began her career in 1994, certified in 2010, and is still currently coaching.

- Participant 11 is an eighth grade mathematics teacher who began her career in 2008, attempted the NBPTS certification process in 2012, and is still currently teaching.
- Participant 12 is an elementary special education/deaf and hard of hearing teacher who began her career in 1994, certified in 2009, and is still currently teaching.

When choosing the participants, I aimed to have a diverse group of teachers who were certified at various points of their career and who teach a variety of subjects at different levels. I did not want to focus on one subject area or one level of instruction, but rather search for commonality that all participants may have undergone through the NB process. I also wanted different viewpoints from teachers who may see the field of education differently through their varied perspectives. Sometimes, teachers tend to think similarly if they teach at the same level (all high school teachers for example) or teach the same subject area (all math teachers for example). I also wanted teachers who certified at different points in their careers so that I can see if there were differences between those who certified early on in their careers versus those who certified later in their careers. Their stories might have interesting similarities and differences.

On the NBPTS website ([www.nbpts.org](http://www.nbpts.org)) there is a directory of teachers who are National Board certified in the state of Illinois. I used this directory, as well as other teachers I knew to locate 15 teachers in the local area. After identifying these teachers, I used email to contact the potential participants for the study. In the same mailing the teachers were informed that participation in the study was voluntary, and that if they agree to participate they could withdraw at any time. They were also notified that during the study, if they chose to no longer participate, their status with the school or the researcher would not be affected. The risks for the participants were minimal. Teachers were not coerced into being interviewed or participating in the study against their will. The potential benefits of this study for the participants included understanding

the reasons why teachers are motivated to complete the National Board Certification process as well as the benefits and burdens that come from it.

If teachers did not respond to the initial email, I followed up with a second email, and if there was still no response then they were excluded from the study. Twelve out of the fifteen teachers who received email invitations replied and said they would participate.

After volunteering to participate, we set up an interview at a place of his/her choice. Most interviews took place in local coffee shops, classrooms, or at participants' homes. At each initial interview, participants signed the consent form and indicated whether they were willing to be audio-recorded. All participants in this study agreed to be audio recorded. Teachers were not compelled to answer any question that they did not feel comfortable answering. All identifiable information was removed including the names of each teacher, the school, and the district in which he/she teaches or taught. Teachers had the opportunity to review their interview transcriptions for accuracy and to ensure that no distinguishing factors have been mentioned that may personally identify them.

## **Methods**

Data collection began with an audio recorded, in-person interview designed to collect information about the participant's journey through their National Board certification process. A follow up discussion (in person interview, email, or phone conversation) took place with some participants if needed. The study concluded with a focus group. Only the nine teachers who achieved NBPTS certification were asked to participate in the focus group, because the topics that were discussed would only be understood by participants who completed the entire process. Only eight of the nine NBCTs were able to attend.

## **Data Collection**

Deciding which method to use to gather data was not easy. One possible method would have been to gather as much data as possible from a large number of NBCTs, through an online survey or some other methods that would provide quantifiable data. The advantage to this type of data collection was that I would have had input from many teachers throughout the state, but the disadvantages would have been that I would not have rich, detailed descriptions of their National Board experience.

Interviews were an appropriate way to gather information for this study for several reasons. First, these teachers had stories to tell and an interview provided a time and place to share their narratives. Filling out a survey, for example, would not be as effective because they would not have been able to give details on their specific motivation, benefits, and burdens. It is very challenging to get at reasons and experiences when collecting data through surveys. Second, a large percentage of the teachers invited to participate in this study responded indicating that they were anxious, or at least willing, to share their experiences. The questions allowed them to relive their journey and provided a time and place to share their experiences. Interviews provided me with detailed stories about the NB process that I used to learn more about motivation, benefits, burdens, and other key components.

I used a semi-structured interview format for these interviews. I brought a list of questions that I followed, but was flexible if interesting trajectories lead us astray. I explored leads, asked follow up questions not on the list; I used the question list more as a guide than a requirement. My goal was to guide them through their NBPTS journeys, learning what they considered the most important aspects of the NB process. Another reason I used a semi-structured interview was because I hoped to meet with each interviewee only once in person, so I

wanted to at least partially direct their stories in order to get rich descriptions from them. For some participants, I used email to ask follow-up questions to clarify responses. There were 24 interview questions (see Appendix A).

After completing the individual interviews and follow-up questions, I held a focus group. Eight of the nine teachers, who completed the NB process successfully, including me, joined the discussion. The reason I chose only the nine NBCTs as opposed to all twelve participants is because the issues that I wanted to discuss were only relevant to those who have completed the entire NB process and achieved certification. The focus group was held at a local library and I used a short list of questions (see Appendix B). The purpose of the focus group was to have collaborative dialogue and discuss common themes in more depth. I also asked the teachers to fill out a short survey asking them to rate the importance of some of the topics that emerged during the individual interviews. Since my research questions mainly focused on benefits gained from the process and burdens faced, I chose not to do a focus group with the three participants who did not achieve because they did not complete enough of the process to fully understand the benefits or burdens.

All individual interviews as well as the focus group were audio recorded and identified each teacher by an assigned number (teacher #1, teacher #2...teacher #12). All audio recordings were transcribed and data were held in a secure location. Data put into electronic format did not contain names or identifying information about participants' schools. Any personal information released by teachers during interviews was changed when entering data electronically to protect their identity. The researcher and principal investigator (adviser) were the only ones with access to the data.

## **Credibility**

I made efforts to ensure that my study is credible and trustworthy. I attempted to depict each participant's story as accurately as possible and include all aspects of his/her NB process. I strengthened my inferences by having my participants speak at length about their main motivators to complete the National Board process, as well as detail other motivators that led to their journey through National Boards. I also attempted to set my feelings aside while interviewing participants trying not to bias their responses. Trust builds credibility, so my first step was to build rapport with each participant. I did this by discussing things we have in common, such as the fact that we are both teachers, have feelings toward the NB process, and share a common language as NBCTs or participants in the NB process.

Following the interviews, I used follow up questions (Skype, email, etc.) to clarify any responses I wanted to probe further. This helped ensure that I collected all the possible data I could from each participant and did not miss any crucial aspects of their NB journeys. I hope to show with my data that I went in depth as much as possible with each participant. Later in the focus group session, I further explored themes I found in interview data.

The focus group also helped build credibility in my study. Participants had the opportunity to extend their original responses by talking with one another. I brought a list of questions, but left the discussion as open ended as possible so that the participants could communicate openly with one another. This allowed me to compare what participants said in focus group to what they said in their individual interviews as well as gain new information from them as they shared their stories with one another.

## **Data Analysis**

Qualitative research allows the researcher to use a variety of methods to analyze the meaning of participants' experiences. Much of the time, reports of qualitative data describe a situation and the researcher's goal is to interpret the meaning of that situation as well as emphasize the discoveries that were found (Anderson, 1998). Charmaz (2006) describes the main parts of analyzing qualitative data. These include transcriptions, coding, and forming/relating categories. She describes the first part of analyzing interview data is transcription. This step includes looking back over interview notes or recordings from the interview to get a clean transcription of all of the questions and answers that took place. There are several different kinds of transcriptions that researcher can use, based on whether he/she is more interested in content, narrative, interactions, context, or other factors. If the researcher was only able to take extensive notes during the interview, then he/she will have to rely on those for the analysis. If a sound recorder is used then the researcher should take those recordings and transcribe them word for word.

In my study, I audio-recorded all interviews. After each interview I transcribed it and began to familiarize myself with the data collected. In analyzing these transcripts, I began to list commonalities I saw emerging after each interview and continued to update this list as I continued with future interviews. I continued to create categories/themes as I interviewed more teachers and looked for other emergent codes as they appeared. I also listed unique aspects of individual cases that were not common to the other participants in hopes of detailing differences in the participants as well.

Charmaz (2006) also details the importance of using a Daily Interpretive Analysis (DIA). This is important when using interview data in a study. The point of a DIA is to assemble all of



the interview data into a transcript the same day the interview(s) occurred. One of the most important aspects of interviewing is the context in which people respond to questions. Often, when using sound recordings, not all of the words are picked up clearly, so by keeping a DIA the researcher has the best chance at remembering what the respondent said. Interview data is fragile; as time passes it becomes increasingly difficult to recall the exact words or clearly read hand written notes. There may be non-verbal cues that are not captured on the sound recordings and if the researcher does not make note of those on the day of the interview, it is quite possible he/she will not remember them when he/she goes to transcribe. It has been suggested that however much time the researcher spends interviewing in the field, they spend twice as much time that same day transcribing the data.

I used a researcher's journal during my interviews and data collection period. I wrote down components of the interview that the audio recording did not pick up such as emotions, facial expressions, frustrations, and other crucial aspects of the interview such as notes about the location and time constraints. As recommended above, I ensured that I transcribed the interview in a timely manner in an attempt to capture and record all of the pertinent interview data. Also in the researcher's journal I kept a list of emergent categories as they were identified. Having this information with me as I interviewed each participant helped me deepen each of these categories and add new experiences as well as add new categories as they arose. I used these themes to guide the next interviews and questions. I also used my journal to write down questions and comments that were unclear after the initial interviews. I clarified these during a follow up interview or during the culminating focus group.

Charmaz (2006) explains that the next step of data analysis is to code the data; the goal is to link specific quotes to analytic concepts and categories. Bogdan and Biklin (1998) have some

suggestions on how this should be done. They recommend that the researcher take long chunks of time to read over their data and try to develop some general, reoccurring categories. This step is often called familiarization. After these categories are developed, the researcher should then sort through the transcripts, make notes, categorize responses, and begin to see some relationships. After the initial coding, a more focused coding should take place to combine some of the similar categories as well as to help see repeating ideas and themes. Berkowitz (1997) suggests six questions when coding qualitative data and they have been summarized below:

- What common themes emerge in responses about specific topics? How do these patterns help to illuminate the broader central question?
- Are there deviations from these patterns? If so, are there any factors that might explain that?
- How are participants' environments or past experiences related to their behavior and attitudes?
- What interesting stories emerge from the responses? How do they help illuminate the central question?
- Do any of these patterns suggest that additional data may be needed? Do any of the central questions need to be revised?
- Are the patterns that emerge similar to the finding of other studies on the same topic? If not, what might explain this?

The final stage of analysis involves explaining how the codes and categories relate to one another, forming categories, and looking for causes and consequences. This too was an ongoing section in my journal. After each interview, comments were recorded that connected that interview to previous ones; I discussed similarities, differences, and early work on preliminary

theories. After I conducted all of my interviews, I used the notes in my journal to look for patterns, anomalies, themes, commonalities, and differences.

In the data I saw several overarching topics with varied data in each, so I decided to group my data by topic. I first made a section discussing candidate knowledge, or lack of knowledge about the NB process. Second, I grouped together data about why participants went through the NB process, so my second section discusses candidate motivation. All participants mentioned their support system as they went through the NB process, and while that support varied, a lot of data was centered around this theme, which I made it my third category. Next, participants had a lot to say about the benefits/burdens of the NB process so I grouped that data into my fourth category. Last, participants were open in giving details on their personal journey so my final section includes individual stories.

Within my categories, participant responses varied greatly. To get more details within my categories, I centered my focus group questions on these themes to deepen my findings and build credibility. I used the focus group data to strengthen the common themes that emerged and to add to the cases that did not fit into the categories.

Each year, numerous teachers in all states are voluntarily choosing to complete the NB process. The reasons why they are putting in so much time and money to further their teaching profession are worth investigating. By doing interviews with a handful of NBCTs, I hoped to learn more about their motivation to complete NB certification as well as gain new insight about the NB process in regards to benefits gained and burdens they faced.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Findings**

The analysis of twelve individual interviews and one focus group are reported in this chapter. The first part of the chapter describes participants' prior knowledge about the NB process before they began and also details their motivation to begin the certification process. The next section describes the support that the participants had as they completed the requirements as well as the benefits/burdens that they faced. The final section describes details of the NB process and provides some specifics about the participants' personal journey through NBPTS.

#### **NBPTS Knowledge**

Ten of my participants, including myself, knew very little about the NBPTS application process before they signed up to complete it. When asked what she knew about the NB process, Participant 12 said, "Not a lot. I knew very little and barely that it even existed." All twelve participants knew it was an optional professional development process that required you to look into your own teaching and reflect. Most knew very little about the time commitments, the exact details of the requirements, the timelines/due dates, etc. No one mentioned knowing anything about the standards, the rubrics, the Architecture of Teaching, or the specific way you had to write for National Boards. Participant 9 spoke similarly, "I didn't have a good sense of timelines or time commitments until I was in the middle of it. I went in very naïve."

All twelve participants knew money was involved if they passed. Participant 5 stated, "I knew about the money, the state of Illinois gave a yearly stipend. I knew it meant more pay." Participant 6 also mentioned the money aspect:

I knew there was money involved. I knew you could earn a stipend. I knew it was time consuming and difficult but I also knew that it was a certificate that could transfer states.

I did not know about the portfolios, writing, videotaping or assessment. The main thing I knew is that it was a transferrable certificate.

A few attended introductory sessions to get more information or did some of their own research online to learn more about the requirements. Everyone knew it was a one to three year process that involved portfolios and assessment center tests.

As detailed in the literature review, Take One! was used as a vehicle to begin three candidates' journeys, providing them with only a limited understanding of the NB process. The other nine completed the full process in the first year. Participant 5 stated similar views:

I really only knew what the principal had shared in terms of a great learning opportunity. It would give me more choices in terms of working directly with teachers, helping teachers. I just knew it was the gold standard of teaching. It's what the best of the best do to prove themselves.

### **Desire for Prior Knowledge**

Five of the participants felt comfortable going into the NB process blindly. Participant 12 stated, "There wasn't a point in the NB process where I thought, I wish I would have known that. I didn't feel unsure about anything because they (cohort leaders) led us so well." Participant 2 said, "Personally, I don't think you can understand the time commitment until you complete it. Even if they told you at the beginning it would take x number of hours, what does that actually mean?" Two of these five people commented that they may not have done it had they known how much time/work it was going to take.

The other seven participants stated that they wished they would have known more about the NB process before they signed up and made the commitment. Knowing about the time commitment and the specifics of the requirements were the most common suggestions.

Participant 7 commented, “I wish I would have understood about the standards and rubrics before going through it. I really struggled with my personal balance.” Participant 10 also commented:

I wish I would have had a general summarization of what to expect from the testing center portion and the nature of the writing prompts. I went into it blindly. I wonder if knowing more specifics about the time commitment would have been helpful. It wasn’t really until I was living/breathing it that I realized the enormity of what I was taking on.

Eight of the twelve participants commented on how they wished they would have known that this would take away family time, spouse time, weekends, evenings, holidays, etc.

One participant who did Take One! the year before mentioned that she wished she would have known her Take One! score before beginning the NB process. Three people mentioned that they wanted to know about the level of support they were going to have, or not have. Participant 8 (myself) wrote, “If I had to pick something to have known before, it would be more about the benefits and possibilities that NB offers once you achieve.” Her thought on this was that if the benefits for passing were better known, it would motivate people as they were completing the NB process.

In summary, eleven out of twelve participants wished they would have had a better understanding of particular aspects of the program, but overall the general consensus was that not much else was needed or could be understood, until they were in the NB process.

### **Motivation to Attempt the NB process**

The three main carrots that motivated the participants to attempt the NB process were (a) a professional development opportunity, (b) the accreditation/honor/recognition that comes with achieving certification, and (c) monetary incentives and stronger credentials.

## **Professional Development Opportunity**

Teachers are encouraged to take advantage of professional development opportunities as they move through their careers. Some teachers choose to attend graduate level classes, others participate in classes provided by the district or attend conferences in their area of expertise, and some teachers choose to complete the National Board process. All of these options can help teachers renew their teaching licenses as well as help them grow as professionals and acquire new knowledge. Nine out of the twelve participants mentioned that they went into NBPTS wanting a “professional challenge” or a “professional growth” experience.

**Professional challenge.** Six teachers wanted to pursue National Boards solely because it was an option for teachers and they wanted to take the challenge. A common theme was that teachers just wanted to do it; they wanted to do it for themselves. Many of the participants commented that just the fact that NBPTS was available for teachers motivated them to do it. As stated by participant 10, “Honestly, I just wanted to do it.” Participant 7 said, “I wanted a challenge. I saw people around me get bitter. I didn’t want to turn into that teacher that everyone wants to get rid of because they are burnt out. I saw this as an opportunity.” Participant 4 agreed that her main motivation was the professional challenge and stated that, “It’s ingrained in me as a professional to always achieve more, I wanted to take another challenge, I felt good at teaching, I thought it would be a good reflection of my teaching and how hard I work.”

Participant 6 was the only person to mention the professionalization of teaching, but she brought it up multiple times as a motivator, an unexpected benefit, and something she could not have gained with another form of professional development. She stated, “I want teachers to be taken more seriously and for teaching to be taken as a profession. I feel like with this title, people look at you more seriously.” Even though Participant 6 was the only teacher to mention this

topic, I personally thought it was important and brought it up during the focus group discussion. I asked the group, “How important is the professionalization of teaching to you? Is NBPTS a way to encourage that?”

In the focus group discussion, Participant 6 spoke first and reiterated the point that this was very important to her because she had felt firsthand the lack of respect for teachers. She was a proponent of NB because it makes teachers look more professional and gives the career validation. She said, “It’s what we do. We don’t play games all day. We are thinkers, we are smart, and we discuss learning/thinking.” One of her goals in going through NB was to make teachers think for themselves and see themselves as professionals. After she spoke, Participant 7 agreed that she felt that after she certified she was taken much more seriously as a professional. Participant 12 mentioned how when she tells people she is a teacher that she is frustrated by comments such as “That’s fun!” or “That’s cute!” or “You must be patient.” She believes the profession is much more than that. Participant 4 mentioned how interesting it is that this process was meant to make teachers’ professionalism resemble that of a doctor’s or a lawyer’s, and even though growth has been made that the profession is still not as respected as it should be.

It was interesting to note that after the focus group discussion, once this topic was mentioned, three other teachers said that they felt similarly and ranked that motivator as being important to them as well. Because the initial interview was not fully inclusive, this idea did not come up until the focus group discussion with their colleagues.

**Growth experience.** In the interviews, eleven of the twelve (Participant 11 was the exception) teachers felt confident in their practice before going through the NB process, but were aware that there is always room for growth. Teachers indicated that they went through the NB process with the knowledge that it was a personal/applicable form of professional development.



Nine out of the twelve participants mentioned that the “personalization” of the NB process was the reason they choose this form of professional development. Participant 12 commented that, “It was extremely applicable to what I was teaching and the time. I knew I could learn something that I could apply immediately. It just fit what my kids needed. Their needs were changing and it was applicable.” Participant 2 agreed, “This was more targeted and applied to what I wanted to do.” And in comparison to other forms of professional development that teachers have participated in, Participant 6 stated, “It is the most relevant research you can do is in your classroom, The NB process is specific to your students, so it’s more relevant than other professional development forms.” Participant 12 was the only teacher who was more motivated by the lack of other professional development in her field. She said, “In deaf Ed, lack of professional development is always a concern. There are always very few teachers in a district. We often have to find our own.”

Another motivator mentioned by one participant (Participant 7) was the lack of effectiveness with the current evaluation systems. She stated, “I was frustrated with the observation process and hadn’t been observed in a long time and wasn’t getting good feedback.” Lack of quality feedback motivated her to complete the NB process. Last, Participant 9 was in dire need of professional development and commented, “At that particular time, I had no excitement anymore. I was at a low point in my career. My main motivation was to see if I wanted to keep teaching or if I should get out. I thought NB would make or break me.” Both of these teachers wanted quality feedback about their teaching as well as practical ideas on how they could improve their practice. They generally felt they were not finding this with the current professional activities.

Three teachers mentioned that their students were a motivator to them. Two of these three teachers felt that they were not reaching their students as well as they believed they could and hoped the NB process would strengthen their practice. Participant 7 commented, “I wanted to puzzle out some of the kids who weren’t succeeding in school. Students were absolutely a motivator, especially the LD/BD kids.” Similar to Participant 7, Participant 1 stated, “I am always looking for ways to motivate and reach my students, going through NB entries helped me reflect on my teaching and make appropriate changes.”

### **Recognition**

Eleven out of twelve participants (Participant 11 was the exception) felt that they were good teachers before they began the NB process, thought they were mostly effective in the classroom, and wanted recognition for what they already do. Nine of these eleven teachers (Participants 10 and 6 were the exceptions) said that the accreditation was their main motivator for going through the NB process. Participant 5 summarizes this by saying, “It wasn’t about the students. I’d been teaching for ten years, I’ve been teaching the same content for four years, so I think it was just about the affirmation.” Participant 8 (myself) summarized the thoughts of many:

My main motivation was the accreditation. I wanted to achieve the highest teaching certificate possible and be known as a master teacher. It was an honor. I wanted to be recognized as a teacher leader and hoped that would provide me with leadership roles in the school/district afterwards, as well as other professional experiences.

### **Monetary Benefits and Stronger Credentials**

Ten of the twelve participants (Participants 11 and 4 were the exceptions) knew of the monetary benefits that come along with achieving a master teaching certificate. Only Participant 2 mentioned these as his number one motivator and stated, “I think probably my main motivation

was the increase in salary that I would get from it. After salary, or tied with salary is prestige and educational recognition.” The other participants mentioned the monetary benefits, but it was a secondary consideration. Participant 9 stated, “Money was not the main motivator, but it was nice.” Participant 8 (myself) agreed and wrote, “The stipends offered were a nice benefit too, I did think about that.” Participant 12 felt a bit stronger about the monetary benefits and said, “Yes, the monetary part of moving up a lane [on the salary scale] was also a factor.”

Along with the monetary benefits, five participants mentioned that strengthening their credentials was a motivator. Participant 4 wanted to move to a different state and knew the transferability of the certificate would assist her in that move. Participant 12 also felt she gained job security with the achievement of National Boards and stated, “There’s some security in saying that I’m a Nationally Board Certified Teacher. I think my certificate will transfer to a license.”

### **Unchanging Motivation/New Motivators Added**

During the interviews, most participants said that their motivation stayed the same throughout the NB process, although many, such as Participant 12, got to a point toward the end where they just wanted to be done, to finish, and to pass:

Towards the end, it was more just hitting the deadline and being done. I just wanted to be done and see a break at the end. It’s like being pregnant. It takes about as long as it does to have a baby. At the beginning you’re excited, and at the end you’re like oh my gosh, this needs to be done.

No one wanted to let this process beat them, or to disappoint themselves or others. Not quitting became a motivator to almost everyone. Participant 7 acknowledged in the focus group, “As I went through the NB process I was overwhelmed and felt panicked. My motivation was

fear. I said I was going to do this. Dropping out was not an option because I committed to it.” Participant 4 felt the motivation of just finishing was powerful and said, “Once I started and realized how horrible it was, I wasn’t going to let it beat me, similar to my doctorate right now. I have to finish now; I’m not going to let it beat me.” No one said their motivation changed to something completely different. It seemed that once participants were in the NB process, their main motivators were still present, but by the end, their minds were primarily focused on finishing.

Some participants who went through NBTPS and passed claimed to have new motivators added throughout the NB process. Some were further motivated by the cohort leaders and other people supporting them in the NB process. For example, Participant 2 mentioned the cohort leaders who were NBCTs and how they helped push them to finish. He stated, “The NB readers, or other people that had NB that I was introduced to, that I didn’t see as that good of teachers, were motivating. If they could do it, I had to do it too.” When they signed up it was initially for personal reasons, but due to this support they evolved to not wanting to let themselves or those supporting them down. Participant 7 said that fear was an added motivation, but that her main motivators remained:

As I went through the NB process I was overwhelmed and felt panicked. My motivation was fear. I said I was going to do this. Dropping out was not an option because I committed to it. My own children saw that I had to work really hard. I felt I would let everyone down if I didn’t finish/pass.

Students grew as a motivator too because they knew their teacher was going through the NB process and teachers did not want to let their students down either.

A new motivator added by Participant 8 (myself) was not just to complete the NB process, but that she wanted to pass as well. She wrote, “Motivation pretty much stayed the same. I worked through the NB process hoping to get the accreditation at the end. Just saying I submitted it was not going to be good enough, I wanted to pass.” Participant 9 was mainly going through the NB process to see if she wanted to remain in the field of education. She stated, “So yeah, my motivation stayed consistent throughout the year. Of course, I asked ‘Why am I doing this? Is it really worth it?’ Yes, it stayed consistent throughout. I was trying to figure out if teaching was still for me.” It seemed that the motivators for those teachers who achieved certification stayed the same throughout the NB process, but more (such as fear and desire for completion) were added in as they were fully invested in the NB process.

In contrast, motivation did decrease for the three participants (Participants 1, 3, 11) who began the NBPTS certification process but did not finish. They were motivated at the beginning of their journey, but it was not strong enough to push them through the rigor of the NB process. Participant 3 elaborated on this:

The tedious requirements of font size, margins, etc. were annoying. The time that it takes to truly put into words all that goes into my practice, the time that is took to deal with technology while viewing video, etc. and using the precious free time I have for family on more stuff for school. I just didn’t need the ego-booster.

Participant 1 also changed her mind about the NB process:

My motivation to reach all of my students and become a better teacher did not change, but my motivation to do that through the NB process did. I chose to take advantage of another opportunity that has made a huge impact on my teaching and increased my subject knowledge greatly.

Participant 1 was a physical education teacher and the alternative professional development she was speaking of was to become Cross Fit certified.

### **Focus Group Summary**

In preparation for the focus group meeting (which only included eight of the nine NBCTs), I took all the interview data and compiled a list of the primary motivators that emerged and put them on a survey. This survey was distributed to participants to rate with a number zero-three. Table 2 shows the motivators sorted from the most influential motivator to the least powerful motivator. The scale was:

0. Not a motivator-I was not motivated by this reason.
1. Slight motivator-not one of my main reasons, but it was secondarily important.
2. Important motivator-definitely one of the reasons I went through the NB process.
3. Huge motivator-possibly the main reason I went through the NB process.

| Table 2   |  |    |    |    |    |     |    |     |                                   |
|---|--|----|----|----|----|-----|----|-----|-----------------------------------|
| <i>NBPTS: Motivators</i>                            |  |    |    |    |    |     |    |     |                                   |
| Possible Motivator                                  | Participant Numbers and Response Answers |    |    |    |    |     |    |     | Average Of focus group Survey N=8 |
|   | #2                                       | #4 | #5 | #6 | #7 | #8* | #9 | #12 |                                   |
| professional challenge                              | 2  | 2  | 3  | 3  | 2  | 3   | 2  | 2   | 2.4                               |
| monetary incentives/stronger credentials            | 3  | 2  | 3  | 0  | 3  | 3   | 1  | 3   | 2.3                               |
| professional/leadership opportunities down the road | 1  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 1  | 1   | 2  | 3   | 2.1                               |
| recognition/accreditation                           | 2  | 2  | 3  | 0  | 1  | 3   | 2  | 2   | 1.9                               |
| students  | 1  | 1  | 2  | 3  | 2  | 0   | 3  | 2   | 1.8                               |
| professionalization of the teaching profession      | 1  | 1  | 2  | 3  | 2  | 0   | 3  | 1   | 1.6                               |
| rejuvenation for teaching                           | 0  | 1  | 3  | 2  | 1  | 1   | 2  | 1   | 1.4                               |
| personalization of the professional development     | 1  | 1  | 0  | 3  | 1  | 0   | 3  | 2   | 1.4                               |
| desire for quality feedback                         | 1  | 0  | 2  | 2  | 1  | 0   | 2  | 2   | 0.8                               |
| lack of other professional development in the field | 0  | 0  | 0  | 2  | 1  | 0   | 1  | 1   | 0.5                               |
| <i>Note: #8* are my own personal ratings</i>        |  |    |    |    |    |     |    |     |                                   |

It is interesting to note that the findings represented on Table 2 show motivators to attempt the NB process varied. No one motivator dominated the list, but rather several motivators were seen as important to participants. Similarly, other than the two categories of professional challenge, and subsequent professional/leadership opportunities, which were a motivator for everyone, all other categories were thought to be less important to some participants and more important to others.

## Support

Participants found support in a variety of ways. Some were part of a cohort support group; others made unofficial support groups in their school buildings; some relied on family and friends for support. Table 3 gives details about the cohorts in which the participants were involved.

### Cohort Support Groups

| Table 3  |                                      |    |     |    |     |    |     |         |
|--|--------------------------------------|----|-----|----|-----|----|-----|---------|
| <i>NBPTS: Cohorts</i>  |                                      |    |     |    |     |    |     |         |
| Cohort Details   | Participant Numbers Response Answers |    |     |    |     |    |     | Average |
|  | #2                                   | #5 | #6  | #7 | #8* | #9 | #12 |         |
| Round trip minutes to travel to cohort session   | 8                                    | 0  | 180 | 0  | 0   | 10 | 60  | 36.9    |
| Number of participants in their cohort group at the beginning  | 30                                   | 20 |     | 25 | 20  | 30 | 19  | 24.0    |
| Number of participants in their cohort group at the end  |                                      | 7  |     | 10 | 10  |    | 19  | 11.5    |
| Total number of sessions attended  | 8                                    | 9  | 3   | 12 | 12  | 6  | 40  | 12.9    |
| <i>Notes: #8* are my own personal ratings. Some participants were unsure of their answers so they left the response blank.</i> |                                      |    |     |    |     |    |     |         |

The data in Table 3 was collected during the focus group where only eight of the nine NBCTs attended, but eleven out of the twelve participants were part of a cohort support group. One or more NBCTs led the cohort groups. They helped participants manage time, explained the requirements, organized videos for participants to watch, and provided emotional support for candidates. Even though all the teachers were self-determined and motivated to begin the NB process, having that support and encouragement from others helped pushed them through the demands of NBPTS. Participant 6 summed it up:



They [supporters] played a huge part in my success. Just being able to commiserate and vent and encourage each other. I still would have done it on my own, but I don't know that it would have been [pause] it really just helped me get through the NB process.

Of the eleven that were part of a cohort, two had a small, unofficial cohort support group with just two to three NBCTs in the building helping them, while the other nine had a large cohort group experience with regularly scheduled meetings (as shown on the chart above). The cohorts seemed to dwindle in all cohorts towards the end of the experience. Two participants commented on how seeing people quit the NB process and not attend meetings as regularly was further motivation for them to finish. Participant 5 said, "It was reinforcing to me to see this big group start, 15-20 people, and see people dwindle off towards the end, especially when we are still suiting up and showing up and doing it." Some cohorts met in the same town as the participant, while others had to drive up to 60 minutes to attend meetings. For the most part, the cohort experiences were very similar in terms of the activities completed: watched videos of teaching, looked at sample portfolios, read for other candidates, created timelines, and talked about time management.

Participant 2 was part of one of the larger cohort support group:

At the cohorts we would have time to just talk to one another about ideas. They were about 1.5 hours-2 hours each meeting. We had readers come in, they read for me at least three to four occasions. There were 20-25 people there at each one. There were monthly meetings towards the beginning, weekly towards the end.

Participant 5 had a similar experience and stated, "All the little graphic organizers were useful. I needed someone to hold me accountable. We viewed video. The face time was important, I don't like emailing, I like the face time with people." Participant 10 found the cohort to be a very

positive experience like most participants and said, “Cohort leaders were also very positive in the NB process. Having a sense of someone taking you through it step by step, explaining, giving lots of examples, helped me to better understand what was being asked through assessment.”

Two of the twelve participants had a negative experience with their cohorts and leaders, eight had positive cohort experiences, and one teacher did not have the support of a cohort. It is important to note that the two who had a bad experience shared the same cohort leaders even though they went through during two different years. Participant 9 details the negative cohort experience by stating, “They [leaders/facilitators of cohort] gave the impression that they were better than us, a very uncomfortable feeling. Me and the other teacher going through would go and would feel uncomfortable and stupid.” Participant 7 was in this same cohort and she explained, “Some of the mentors hadn’t even passed. I did a lot of trying to find out a lot of things on my own, there weren’t resources yet. I often was left more confused.” These two participants found support in other colleagues in their building as well as NBCTs that they knew, and found little benefit from the provided cohort sessions. Participant 4 had no cohort support in the NB process because it was not well known in the area she was teaching and no other teacher was attempting the NB process at the time. She wished she had some kind of collegial encouragement during the development of her materials:

I’m sure there were words of encouragement along the way from some, but I feel that I did it alone. When no one knows what it is, it’s hard for people to support. I did it all alone. I wish I had had support. If I knew what I was really getting into, it may not have stopped me, but I would have researched it more, seek out more help, or talk to someone else before starting. Having a cohort would have at least given me someone to talk to about the NB process, someone who understood and could help.

## **Benefits/Burdens of Cohorts**

Almost everyone went to group meetings religiously at the beginning of the NB process, did not attend as much once they grew accustomed to the NB process, and then went back to meetings at the end for help with packing, shipping, and assessment center work. It seems that the main benefits of the cohort groups included a place to check in with others doing the NB process, people with whom they could discuss ideas, other participants to read work and give feedback, leaders to help explain what NBPTS is asking participants to do, and people to provide motivation to continue the NB process. Participant 8 (myself) detailed her experience:

They [group leaders] had participants work through several activities, read for each other, watch videos, evaluate student work, collaborate together, and put on a great support group for the cohort. It was an amazing experience. Almost like therapy for those going through the NB process. It was nice to learn more about standards from other certificate types, the requirements for other certificates, and hear other people's struggles and successes. I wouldn't have survived or passed without the cohort.

The three participants who began the NB process but did not finish were also involved with a cohort group. Participant 3 stated, "Yes I was part of a cohort, but with two active children and a family business to help run, I just couldn't meet when they met." Participant 1 was another teacher who did not complete the NB process, and she was an active participant in the cohort meetings when she first began the NB process. She and a colleague were going through the NB process together and attended the cohort sessions together as well. Participant 1 said, "Yes we met once or twice a month at the beginning, and the support was nice. It was comforting to be going through with a colleague, but it also made it a lot easier to quit when she quit."

In summary, the most important components as identified from the focus group interview are listed below on Table 4 beginning with the ones voted most important down to those voted least important. Having leaders to explain the requirements was the most important component of cohorts, closely followed by a place to check in with others and the option to have readers give feedback on writing samples.

| Table 4   |   |    |    |    |     |    |     |         |
|---|---|----|----|----|-----|----|-----|---------|
| <i>NBPTS: Cohort Components</i>   |   |    |    |    |     |    |     |         |
| Components  | Participants Numbers and Response Answers<br>(1- least important; 3-most important) |    |    |    |     |    |     | Average |
|   | #2  | #5 | #6 | #7 | #8* | #9 | #12 |         |
| leaders to explain requirements   | 3   | 3  | 1  | 3  | 3   | 2  | 3   | 2.6     |
| a place to check in with others   | 2   | 2  | 1  | 3  | 3   | 2  | 2   | 2.1     |
| readers to give feedback  | 1   | 3  | 0  | 2  | 3   | 3  | 3   | 2.1     |
| time management strategies  | 1   | 3  | 1  | 2  | 1   | 3  | 1   | 1.7     |
| watching/analyzing video  | 2   | 3  | 1  | 3  | 1   | 1  | 1   | 1.7     |
| people to motivate you  | 2   | 3  | 0  | 2  | 1   | 2  | 2   | 1.7     |
| people to bounce ideas off of   | 2   | 1  | 0  | 3  | 1   | 2  | 2   | 1.6     |
| graphic organizers  | 1   | 3  | 0  | 2  | 2   | 1  | 2   | 1.6     |
| emotional support   | 2   | 1  | 0  | 2  | 1   | 2  | 1   | 1.3     |
| <i>Notes: #8* are my own personal ratings. Also, of the eight people who participated in the focus group, only seven of them were part of a cohort.</i> |   |    |    |    |     |    |     |         |

**Mandated cohorts.** During the focus group discussion, participants were asked if the NBPTS should require some form of collegial collaboration, especially since it was so important to many of the participants in my study. All participants agreed that even though it was an important part of the NB process, it should *not* be mandated by NBPTS. Because the NB process is so personal, participants felt that guidance should be a personal choice as well and that participants should get guidance from varied sources and in varied amounts depending on their needs. Participant 12 stated, “Just like our students, we have individual needs in terms of

support, so it's nice to have a spectrum from small support groups to an entire class." Participant 8 (myself) mentioned how sometimes the support groups were helpful, but other times she just wanted to work independently and that being forced to attend a cohort session would have negatively impacted her experience with the NB process. Even Participant 4 who did not have support through the NB process agreed that "support should be offered and advertised, but not required." Participant 7 summed up the conversation and said, "People get support from so many places. If you require someone to have a cohort experience, it almost seems contrived."

### **Administrative Support**

Most of the comments regarding administrative support described administrators as not knowing much about the NB process; nevertheless they encouraged and supported teachers going through it. Participant 8 (myself) summed up most of the comments of the participants, "Administration was supportive. My principal didn't know much about the NB process, or ask a lot of questions, but checked on our progress, mentioned us at staff meetings, and gave some writing days when I asked." Participants 5, 6, and 8 had the same principal who they considered to be supportive and accommodating. It seemed for the most part that administrators were verbally supportive in the NB process, but did not provide any direction or assistance.

Most administrators did what they were asked to do (sign off on forms, allow video-taping, etc.) but did not play an active role in the NB process other than verbal encouragement. All administrators who were asked to allow writing days agreed, but some participants did not think to ask their administrator for this. Upon completion or passing, administrators celebrated with cakes, announcements in newsletters and at staff meetings, and congratulated teachers. Participant 7 said, "Administration was holding their breath because I hadn't passed yet. The school board was very positive, clueless, but positive. I wanted to take other people with me on

the journey but didn't know how to do it." Besides the participant with the negative administrator, no one else felt any constraints in their district or schools, other than a general lack of knowledge.

Participant 2 was the only participant with a principal who was negative towards the NB process. He said, "My administrator was not very supportive of it, and thought I was doing something for myself and that it was not appropriate."

Many administrators supported (and celebrated) teachers after they passed, more so than while they were going through the NB process. Participant 10 spoke about how supportive administration was after she passed:

Administration was not really in the picture at all, except for initial encouragement and basic understanding of the workload, but not really any support. After having achieved, the principal that school year made a big announcement at a faculty meeting, a heartfelt speech about how hard the NB process is, self-determination, etc. He did a great job acknowledging it in front of the staff.

Participant 7 felt similar support after she achieved her NB certification:

After we certified they were absolutely supportive. After that, someone took it to the board for us to get a stipend, retroactive, and that is still in place. The district had a celebration for just the two of us. A PR person came to take pictures. We were the first two in the district. NEA, (newspaper), called and talked to me about being in an article, opening the door for other people. My class was on the front of the NEA magazine. The district came and took a picture of my class but I didn't know it would be in the magazine. It was the class that I wrote about. They gave that picture to the state for the magazine. It was really uncomfortable because that's not my thing. I was asked to mentor

by other teachers because of my accomplishment. Administrators did give me days to write, I took two but I think they would have given more. It was precedent setting for other people. I was very aware that I was opening doors for other people, and that I can impact all teachers. I didn't want it to be just about me. Even though I was uncomfortable with all the hype, I wanted teachers to be celebrated.

**Raising awareness/knowledge.** During the focus group discussions, the participants were asked how important administrative/teacher awareness of the NBPTS was to them and if measures should be taken to increase awareness. Three of the participants had never heard of the NB process until it was suggested by their administration, and none of them believed they would have pursued it otherwise. It seemed that principals were aware of the NB process, but were not very knowledgeable. If more principals were aware and knowledgeable of the NB process, they would have the ability to encourage more teachers to pursue certification. Participant 2 stated, "I don't think administrative knowledgeable is essential, but I do think it's important. It would have made my life easier for sure."

Participant 7 spoke of how the state does do some outreach through flyers and emails, but agreed that more can be done to get educators aware of the NB process. She said, "There is a network in our state. I don't know much about it, but it's been continuing over the last few years." Providing educators more knowledge about the NB process would not only make more people aware that it is an option, but it would also enable those who choose to pursue certification a better understanding of the requirements. Participant 4 also spoke of how more awareness should be raised, but mentioned that it needs to go beyond the field of education. She stated, "Maybe it does start from the educational field and then goes broader." She was hoping that more people would have a positive view of teachers and see them as professionals.

## **Personal Support**

Many people signed up because other people signed up in their building or department, and those colleagues were motivators. One participant went through with his/her spouse (the spouse is not included in this study). Every participant had some form of personal support system (kids at home, spouse, parents, colleagues, cohort, etc.). Participant 2 stated that his parents and family were his main supporters. He said, “My parents did [support me]. My dad is a professor and my mom has a master’s. They did a lot of reading for me. My parents and family, they were very supportive.” Several participants mentioned how family members picked up slack at home, allowed them a quiet time and place to work, understood when they missed going to events due to writing, and showed their support in other ways.

Students potentially could have been supporters in the NB process by giving teachers positive encouragement, or even through student growth, but no one mentioned students as supporters. For all participants, students were aware that their teachers were going through the NB process due to the permission slips required to be video recorded and teacher discussions with them. Students were mentioned as motivators, but not as direct supporters.

## **Benefits and Burdens**

There were numerous benefits that teachers received from going through the NB process. There were also burdens that teachers faced as they attempted to complete all of the requirements in the one year time frame for initial submission.

## **Benefits**

With data collected from the initial interviews with participants, I created a list of the benefits and burdens that were discussed. All focus group participants (eight of the nine NBCTs) were given the list of benefits below at the beginning of the focus group and were asked to rank



them each on a zero to three scale; zero meaning it was not applicable to them and three meaning it was extremely applicable to them. The details of this data are listed in Table 5.

| Table 5  |  |     |    |    |    |     |    |     |         |
|--|--|-----|----|----|----|-----|----|-----|---------|
| <i>NBPTS: Benefits</i>   |  |     |    |    |    |     |    |     |         |
| Benefit  | Participant Numbers and Response Answers |     |    |    |    |     |    |     | Average |
|  | #2                                       | #4  | #5 | #6 | #7 | #8* | #9 | #12 |         |
| more aware of teaching/more reflective                           | 1  | 2   | 3  | 3  | 2  | 2   | 3  | 3   | 2.4     |
| learned more about students, their families, the community       | 1  | 1   | 3  | 3  | 2  | 1   | 3  | 2   | 2.0     |
| personal sense of accomplishment, confidence                     | 2  | 3   | 3  | 0  | 2  | 1   | 3  | 2   | 2.0     |
| leadership opportunities   | 1  | 2.5 | 3  | 0  | 2  | 1   | 3  | 3   | 1.9     |
| district stipend/moving up on the pay scale                      | 3  | 0   | 3  | 0  | 2  | 3   | 1  | 3   | 1.9     |
| recognition/prestige/affirmation                                 | 3  | 2   | 3  | 0  | 2  | 3   | 1  | 1   | 1.9     |
| professionalism/people take you more seriously                   | 3  | 2   | 3  | 0  | 2  | 1   | 2  | 2   | 1.9     |
| certification perks (easy renewal, longer term, transferability) | 2  | 2   | 3  | 0  | 3  | 2   | 1  | 1   | 1.8     |
| master teacher perception/valued opinions                        | 1  | 2   | 3  | 0  | 2  | 2   | 1  | 2   | 1.6     |
| a resume builder   | 3  | 2.5 | 0  | 0  | 2  | 2   | 1  | 2   | 1.6     |
| job security/positive district evaluations                       | 2  | 1   | 0  | 0  | 2  | 0   | 2  | 2   | 1.1     |
| college credit hours   | 2  | 0   | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0   | 0  | 0   | 0.3     |
| <i>Note: #8* are my own personal ratings.</i>                    |  |     |    |    |    |     |    |     |         |

Participants were motivated by many factors to attempt the NB process. There was no single motivator that was prevalent to most participants. This is similar to the benefits that participants got out of the NB process as described in their interviews; there was no one main benefit or incentive that was dominant.

The participants who did not finish the NB process (three total) had different answers when asked about the benefits of NBPTS when compared to the nine that completed and achieved certification. The three non-completers were either unsure of the incentives that were

offered (Participant 3 and Participant 11), or only knew about the plaques that hung outside NBCTs doors (Participant 1). Because all of the incentives come after completion and certification, it makes sense that these three participants did not know exactly what was offered to NBCTs. The other nine participants knew of the incentives because they had already received them since completing the NB process.

Incentives mentioned by participants who completed the NB (9 total) process included moving up on the pay scale (mentioned by 2/9 participants), college credit hours (2/9 participants), perception as a master teacher by colleagues/opinions are more valued (6/9 participants), leadership/committee opportunities (5/9 participants), job security and helped with district evaluations (3/9 participants), a resume builder (2/9 participants), certificate perks such as easy renewal, longer term, and transferability (4/9 participants), and recognition (1/9 participants). There was a lot of overlap in participants' responses between the interview questions about incentives and how participants described the benefits they gained from the NB process.

**Monetary.** Of the nine participants who achieved certification, all of them mentioned a stipend offered by their school district. The stipend differed by district but generally ranged from \$1500 to \$2000 per year, distributed out over the year. The participants who certified before them, did not generally get a district stipend, but as NBCTs became more numerous and respected, stipends were put into place. Participant 7 was the first NBCT in her district and she pushed for a district stipend. She said, "The stipend went into effect the following year [after her certification]. It's is now \$2000, and [comparable district] is only \$1500." Participant 5 also appreciates the extra money and says, "We get \$1500 per year; it's \$100 per month and it's nice to have on my paycheck."

**Recognition/Prestige.** Participant 12 was the only participant to mention formal recognition, “They have the dinner for you, recognize you at the board meeting and give you a plaque, and you want to be recognized. When you see some of your peers not certify, and you think ‘Darn it, I did!’” Five of the nine participants were asked to take on leadership roles after certification. Participant 8 (myself) wrote, “After certification, I was asked to lead a school wide professional development opportunity in the school. I saw this as an honor and a positive opportunity.” Three of the teachers were asked to lead their school through the Take One! process. Participant 5 mentioned this, “Our building administrators view us as master teachers, and seek us out to develop the people we work with. Take One! is an example of being asked to do a leadership role in the building.”

Seven participants mentioned feeling prestige/a sense of increased status and accomplishment, receiving a plaque for recognition, people taking them more seriously, validation in what they were doing in the classroom, being perceived as a master teacher, or feeling in some other way recognized and affirmed for what they are doing. Participant 2 comments on this by stating, “A benefit is prestige. I put it on my resume. I value other teachers who have certification. I look up to those people and like to know I’m on par with them.” Participant 5 was very emotional when she began to talk about the benefits she received and said, “I feel like, the feeling of I did this. I did something that only 30-40 percent of people who attempt it actually pass. I like my plaque outside my room! It does make me feel accomplished. I’ve proven it!” Participant 6 was motivated by the hopes to professionalize teaching and for people to take her more seriously:

The main benefit would be feeling like and people seeing me as more of a professional. Historically teachers are looked at as people who can’t do anything else and I never

thought of teaching that way. I get disappointed when teachers act like that. I do feel that people treated me differently after I achieved, we were invited certain places, asked advice on certain things. Personally, it was a validation.

Participant 10 summed it up by stating, “The main thing is recognition. It holds a weight.”

It is interesting to note that only Participant 6 mentioned the professionalization of teachers in her interview, but when presented with it on a list of options, six of the eight focus group members ranked it with a two or three. With the initial interview not being inclusive, participants did not think much about their journey through the NB process being a pathway to help professionalize the teaching profession, but once it was discussed at the focus group many participants saw this as important.

**Credentials.** Four participants mentioned the importance of being able to put NBCT on their resume, using the title to get a new job, or to take advantage of the transferability and lengthening of the certificate. Participant 2 stated, “I think it’ll pay off someday when I apply for a university teaching position and they recognize my NB teaching certificate.” Participant 4 had already reaped the benefits because she was able to obtain a new job in a different state. She reported, “The NB certification was the conduit that helped me get that job that made me the teacher I am today.” Participant 5 and Participant 8 (myself) had not used the transferability of the certificate, but did see it as a bonus. Participant 8 wrote, “The certification also helps with certificate renewal. I do want to teach in another state at some point so this is a nice bonus.”

Participant 10 went into detail about how she felt that the certification made her opinion more valuable as well as assisting her with her principal evaluation:

I feel that my opinion is valued. It was beneficial during evaluation last school year because I was being evaluated by a brand new admin with a brand new evaluation tool.

Through NB work I was able to question my review and provide many examples of evidence of how I was excellent in many categories. My overall rating was excellent, and it gave my confidence to say that I am a damn good teacher and know how I can show you that. It was powerful to be able to say that I am one of three NBCTs in a staff of over 100, so how can I only be proficient? It gave teeth to my argument because of my title and was able to articulate what I do in the classroom and how I do it well.

Participant 6 made a comparison from education to business, “It’s a good resume builder. I feel like it’s equivalent to an MBA in business.”

**More aware/reflective.** Three participants mentioned that they felt they were more knowledgeable about their students are more purposeful about what they do and why, Participant 1 was one of them:

I did a survey with a class of students about their family activity levels in preparation for an entry I didn’t complete. Even though I didn’t complete that particular entry I was surprised and enlightened by several responses. Several students’ families’ activity level was far below where they wanted it to be, this helped me teach activities and games that require no equipment so they can do them at home with their families.

Participant 4 remembered how she felt right after certification and says, “Immediately after the NB process, I would say that it was to help my students and be aware of how to better my teaching. I still think that way in the long run.” Being a special education teacher, Participant 12 does not often see student gain like other teachers do. After watching her videos and achieving certification she says, “Especially in special education, the kids make slow progress, so watching my video and knowing that I am making a positive benefit in students’ lives was nice.”

Participant 9 was the teacher who went through NB to see if she wanted to stay in the teaching career. Her benefits were slightly different than the benefits of the other participants because for her, the NB process transformed her into a different teacher:

I'm a completely different teacher. The architecture of teaching, that's what gets me ready each day. There are my kids, what do they need? How am I going to get them ready? I used to think that it was the kids' fault that they aren't learning. Now I've changed my mindset due to NB. It doesn't matter who the kid is, or what's wrong at home, every kid can learn. What is it that I know about my kids? How can I change my teaching to reach them? .... I now think so much more positively about my kids than I did before. For example, one student is developmentally delayed (by three years) and I have an autistic girl, I used to think about how much of a chore they are. Now I think about positives of these kids, I see their sense of humor.... I have a different mindset than I did years ago it goes back to what do I know about my kids, there's something good about every kid you have.

Participant 6 summarized the benefit of more purposeful instruction during the focus group discussion when she stated, "The biggest thing NB does is make you identify what you do with students that one year. It makes you complete the planning process so every year I will think 'these are my kids, what should I do?'"

**Leadership and confidence.** Two of the other commonly listed benefits were being provided with leadership opportunities (listed by three participants) and gaining confidence (listed by three participants). Participant 7 went into a lot of detail about the leadership opportunities she has been provided because of her NB certification:

I was trained to be a professional development provider, and had several opportunities like this. I had an opportunity to take a cognitive coaching course at the U of I. I feel connected with other people to do things such as a lot of mentoring training. I am now part of the design team for new teacher evaluations and the new evaluation system. I've had opportunities to get more professional development and network with different teachers. I also went through Danielson training. It's broadened my opportunities in ways of looking at the profession.

Participant 12 commented on how she has more confidence now to step up and take more responsibility. She said, "I gained a lot of confidence, I wanted to step it up because of my accomplishments. I wanted to continue that trend and started doing conferences and also started stepping up and doing presentations or jobs for the district." During the focus group the teachers were asked further about this topic, and Participant 8 (myself) wrote, "In regards to the professional development experience, from beginning to end, I am more confident. When I completed the NB process I felt like I had won, and my students had won."

### **Unexpected Benefits**

Three out of twelve participants claimed that there were no unexpected benefits from the NB process. Two of these three participants were ones who did not complete the NB process or achieve certification. The other participant, who did not complete the NB process, gained self-knowledge. She learned that she was not ready for this process:

What I got out of it was that I was not ready. I really feel like people should only complete this process if they are currently in grad school, or have been in grad school at the same time as teaching for a couple of reasons. One reason I feel this way is that it would allow you to better anticipate obstacles and balance your time. Another reason I

feel this way is because it [graduate school] would give me a more vast professional repertoire and set of experiences to draw from.

The other nine participants had varied responses when asked about unexpected benefits. Some of the personal benefits that teachers got out of this process included weight loss, not taking themselves so seriously, and the sense of achievement. Participant 2 stated, “It was pretty fun. I’m really about experiences. Since doing it I’ve learned infinitely more, but at the time it was fun. I’d do it again!” Participant 10 also enjoyed the experience and said, “I underestimated how good it would feel to achieve. There have been few things I’ve wanted more in life.” Watching videos of their own teaching inspired Participant 7 and Participant 8 to make some personal changes as well. Participant 8 (myself) wrote, “Watching myself on video inspired me to lose 60 pounds!” and Participant 7 stated, “I learned that I take myself too seriously sometimes, and I lost perspective and made some unrealistic expectations.”

**Professional benefits.** Five of the participants listed unexpected professional benefits that they gained including things such as beginning a journal, seeing students grow academically, noticing the architecture of teaching everywhere, and changing assessment practices. Participant 4 stated that her unexpected benefits included, “Seeing students grow, getting offered a job in Tennessee hopefully will help with a future job after my doctoral degree. Also, it may help me back into the public school system after my doctorate degree at [institution name removed].” Participant 6 went into the NB process thinking that she would care most about the transferability of the certificate since she wanted to move in a couple years. She got an unexpected benefit and explained by saying, “I didn’t anticipate that I’d care so much about the professionalism. I thought I would care more about moving states, and didn’t think I’d come out feeling like wow I’m a professional.” Participant 7 now sees the Architecture of Teaching when



she is at other workshops and meetings and is reminded to put her student needs first. She did not expect this benefit from the NB process and reported, “Any time I go to professional development in the district, I see the architecture of teaching. I see new initiatives all the time, but they all tie to the architecture of teaching. Response Teaching and Differentiated Instruction are two examples.” Participant 12 did not expect to appreciate the questioning of the NB process as much as she does. She now passes that onto the pre-service teachers that she works with in her classroom. She stated, “I now ask my student teachers to reflect on lessons, passing that reflection piece on to new teachers as well.”

**Sensitivity to diversity.** During the focus group discussion, participants were asked if going through the NB process made them more sensitive to diversity in the classroom, and if so to discuss what lead to that change.

All the participants discussed in detail the students they worked with the year they went through the NB process. Each participant had a unique group of students compared to other participants. Some classes were very small (5 students) and some were between 20-30 students, there was mixture of SES statuses, races, religions, social aptitude, and intellectual abilities. Participant 12 spoke about how working her diverse group made the writing process easier because she found it easy to describe all the ways in which she knows her students and differentiates to meet their needs. All of the focus group participants said they felt the same way and agreed that more homogeneous classrooms make it harder to respond to the NB standards. Participant 7 stated, “Addressing diversity is an integral piece of everyone’s standards. That’s the underpinning of the NB process, that you understand each student and his/her needs.”

When participants were asked if the NB process would have been more challenging had they used a homogeneous class, Participant 6 quickly responded, “That class doesn’t exist.” and all other participants agreed.

### **Types of Diversity**

To further investigate how the NB process addresses diversity, I followed-up on the phone or email with each of the participants to ask a follow up question after the conclusion of the focus group discussion. I asked them to describe the kinds of diversity that were relevant as they planned their lessons for the NB process, wrote their papers, and completed their reflections. I also asked them to give examples of how they attended to diversity during the NB process.

When asked about diversity, Participant 5 stated, “I never thought about it in terms of ethnicity. I thought about it terms of student need.” As a special education reading teacher, she looked at each student separately to address their individual needs by analyzing student work, collecting assessments, and collaborating with other teachers who worked with the same students. She wanted all students to be able to access the curriculum, while working at their own pace. Her primary focus was how students learn best, what their needs are, and how to successfully get them to grow academically.

Participant 12 is a DHH (Deaf and Hard of Hearing) teacher who primarily worked with students on language development and learning sign language. When asked about diversity as she was going through the NB process, she stated, “While race enters my mind initially, race is not as much of a determining factor as home access to language.” She also mentioned that SES does enter the picture, and that race and SES often have a correlation, but what was most relevant to her was the language level of each student and the access that each student had to

resources to support their learning of sign and language development. To further clarify, she provided an example, “One of the students had an extremely low language level. I had to make a lot of adaptations and accommodations in terms of language to meet his needs.” Participant 12 and Participant 5, both being special educators, primarily focused on the particular needs of individual students to diversify their instruction.

Participant 2 was a regular education teacher, but worked with a variety of students with special needs. When asked about diversity, he stated, “It was important to me to teach so that my students with IEPs would have the same chance to be successful as my non-IEP students.” He discussed some examples of how he changed assessment practices to make it “appropriate and supportive of my students.” His main focus, like other participants, was to make sure that each student had access to the curriculum.

Being a math teacher, Participant 8 (myself) primarily also focused on differentiating her instruction to meet the diverse needs of her students. She wrote, “I didn’t pay much attention to race, religion, gender, or differences such as those, but more so their learning styles.” She spoke about how she did a lot with manipulatives so that the struggling students could see the concepts concretely, she followed that with pictorial representations so that visual learners were addressed, and incorporated auditory components into her instruction as well. She stated, “I do think learning differences affect how student learn, so as a teacher I want to teach in a way that will produce the most student gains.” Her main focus was to make the content meaningful to students and to teach it in a way that reached all students.

Participant 6 had a slightly different answer to the diversity question. She too thought about learning styles and ability level, but she also stated that she took ethnicity and gender into account during her planning and instruction:

In one of my entries I created heterogeneous groups, with varied ability levels and ethnic backgrounds. I purposely did that because the activity included discussion. Diverse groups allowed for students to hear varied perspectives. In Entry 2 my students were in homogeneous groups based on ability level. This was purposeful because those students demonstrated a need to develop the specific skill I was teaching.

Participant 9, like Participant 6, used the diversity of her class to help students grow academically. Her classroom was diverse including students from a variety of countries, speaking a variety of languages, and with varying SES statuses. She used this diversity to teach her students about differences. She partnered them up with someone different, had them conduct interviews with each other, and then asked them to create a poster to explain to the class about the other student. She stated, “The goal was to see if there were any family traditions, activities, etc. that were the same or different. The partner pairs were purposely not from the same country and often did not speak the same language.” Because of the diversity of the class, the students were able to experience it in a meaningful way. Participant 9 stated, “In order for a classroom to truly feel like a safe community, the diversity of the students must be embraced and celebrated. This project helped the students understand that differences should be celebrated.”

Participant 4 explained, “We often assume that we plan for diversity, but once you examine your practice you realize that you may have a narrow frame of reference for what diversity really means.” She then listed the types of diversity that should be included when planning instruction. Her list included intellectual abilities, ethnic-cultural and racial differences, gender, socio-economic, religious, and communication differences. During her NB process, as she was considering her students and planning her instruction, she explained how she became

more aware of the differences in her students. She stated, “Some of these things become part of your knowledge of your students over time, but initially it has to be much more conscious.”

Participant 7 also realized during her NB process that gender differences should be addressed more in her classroom. She stated, “I had a student who was having difficulty with peers due to his preference for what would typically be considered female interests.” She thinks this is a common issue at school, a greater issue than most think, and one that should be more consistently addressed.

### **Burdens**

After analyzing the interview data, I took the common burdens coded from the participants’ interviews and created a survey. All eight participants at the focus group discussion were given the list of items appearing on Table 6 at end of the focus group and were asked to rank them each on a zero to three scale; zero being a nonexistent challenge and three being a great challenge.

| Table 6   |  |     |    |    |    |     |    |     |         |
|---|--|-----|----|----|----|-----|----|-----|---------|
| <i>NBPTS: Burdens</i>   |  |     |    |    |    |     |    |     |         |
| Burdens   | Participant Numbers and Response Answers |     |    |    |    |     |    |     | Average |
|   | #2                                       | #4  | #5 | #6 | #7 | #8* | #9 | #12 |         |
| time requirements   | 1  | 2   | 2  | 3  | 1  | 3   | 3  | 3   | 2.3     |
| nebulous process/lack of direction  | 2  | 3   | 1  | 2  | 0  | 1   | 2  | 2   | 1.6     |
| the suffering of others (family, students, friends)   | 2  | 1   | 1  | 3  | 0  | 1   | 3  | 1   | 1.5     |
| the NB process consumes you/lose sight of other things                                      | 1  | 1   | 0  | 2  | 0  | 3   | 2  | 1   | 1.3     |
| lack of support (colleagues, administration, family)  | 1.5                                      | 3   | 0  | 2  | 0  | 0   | 1  | 2   | 1.2     |
| money   | 1  | 3   | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0   | 2  | 3   | 1.1     |
| decreased attention on planning/teaching/students   | 0  | 1   | 3  | 2  | 1  | 0   | 2  | 0   | 1.1     |
| other sacrifices due to the NB process  | 1  | 1   | 0  | 1  | 0  | 2   | 2  | 1   | 1.0     |
| physical effects (loss of sleep, illness, stress)   | 0  | 2   | 1  | 2  | 0  | 1   | 2  | 0   | 1.0     |
| cutting back on other professional and personal commitments                                 | 0  | 0   | 1  | 2  | 0  | 2   | 2  | 1   | 1.0     |
| lack of state money as an incentive   | 0  | 1.5 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0   | 2  | 3   | 0.8     |
| risk of putting yourself out there  | 0  | 1   | 0  | 2  | 0  | 0   | 2  | 0   | 0.6     |
| opportunity cost (meaning the loss of potential gain from doing something other than NBPTS) | 0  | 0   | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1   | 1  | 1   | 0.5     |
| negative/jealous colleagues   | 0  | 0   | 0  | 2  | 0  | 0   | 2  | 0   | 0.5     |
| sense of “now what” when the NB process is over   | 0  | 0   | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1   | 1  | 1   | 0.4     |
| travel expenses   | 0  | 0   | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0   | 1  | 0   | 0.1     |
| <i>Note: #8* are my own personal ratings.</i>   |  |     |    |    |    |     |    |     |         |

The time it takes to complete the NB process was overwhelmingly and the most common burden reported. Due to the time it takes to plan detailed lessons, video tape classes, analyze the footage, reflect on the lessons, write up the portfolio entries, study for the assessment center exercises, collect student work, analyze student work, document professional development, and attend cohort sessions, teachers said that they had to make major sacrifices in other areas.

Participants said that they were more stressed due to the time requirements, they had less time at home for friends and families, lost sleep, were stressed out, took on fewer other commitments in both their personal and professional lives, suffered relationship stress, and had little free time to do other things. Participant 7 said, “I remember turning left on a red light on more than one occasion. It consumes you. You are doing routine things and you don’t realize you’re doing routine things.”

Some of the other disadvantages of the NB process included nebulous directions and requirements, lack of administration support, the expense of the NB process, jealousy/negativity of colleagues, no monetary incentives from the state that were previously offered (even though district stipends are still provided), and a sense of “now what” when the NB process was over. Participant 6 mentioned a lot of these challenges:

It costs a lot of money to complete it and it takes a lot of time. I felt when we achieved people thought that we thought we were better than them. Especially when we led professional development, people were kind of put off. People’s comments about how NB doesn’t really mean you’re a good teacher were insulting. Jealously a little. Stress for sure.

Participants were asked further about this topic during the focus group, and Participant 6 mentioned a challenge that seemed to be shared with many of the participants. The discussion was centered about how many participants had a roller coaster of emotions as they went through the NB process, feeling confident in some areas, and finding themselves lacking in other areas. She said, “You have moments of self-doubt as well as self-confidence, especially when you see things on video. It’s a dichotomous inner struggle with yourself.”

## Practice Changes

Six of the nine NBCTs claimed to have been changed due to the NB process. These participants believed that they had truly changed as educators because of their journeys through the NB process. Some of the ways that teachers felt they have changed included the ways in which they planned, they became more thoughtful in their instruction, gained confidence in their practice, found urgency in their practice, improved their writing skills, were more apt to seek out professional development opportunities and take risks, gained initiative to set and achieve goals, found balance between work and home, documented more in terms of their practice, and changed how they assess student achievement.

**More reflective.** Four participants said that the NB process made them more reflective about their lessons. Participant 1 said, “I was more reflective on my teaching. When a lesson didn’t work, I reflected on why and what I can do to make it better more in depth than any year before.” Participant 6 and Participant 9 also commented on how the NB process requires teachers to be deeply reflective and self-critical, more than they had ever done before:

I do believe that going through the NB process did help to change me as a teacher. I do a better job of reflecting on and analyzing the work that my students accomplish. This has led me to do a much better job differentiating for my students.

Participant 7 agreed and stated, “My teaching has a newfound urgency as a result of going through the NB process. Every day, I reflect on what my students learned, emphasizing the impact my teaching had on student performance that day.” She went on to say that she now fully understands how essential the integration of curriculum is and the reflection piece of the NB process pushed her to differentiate more effectively as well as scaffold her instruction. She also



realized how to find a better balance between home and work and can now manage her time better after going through the NB process.

**Focused planning.** Five participants mentioned that they were much more focused on planning, were more aware of their students' needs, and were more thoughtful about their teaching. Participant 4 said, "I am more focused on planning. You want to think that you always want the most out of your lessons, but when you complete the plan/write/reflect you make sure it's the best you can do." Participant 11 stated, "I feel it made me better evaluate what I am doing and why I am doing it." Participant 6 and Participant 9 also mentioned how they now start the lesson planning process by thinking about their students first, not the curriculum, and knowing so much more about their students makes the planning more thoughtful. Participant 6 said, "I think more in depth about where my students are currently. I connect it to what I want my students to learn, how to get them there, and how I know when they get there." Participant 4 stated, "It did make me think even more critically about my planning, teaching, and assessing. The NB process is so detailed that it forces you to think about every detail."

Other participants told stories about how they used to plan units and how they did it differently now that they are more aware of their students and the architecture of teaching. They now focus on the students first, thinking about what their prior knowledge is and how they can tie that to new knowledge before they plan. Participant 9 made a rubric for a picture book story project she did with her students and then allowed her students to reach the rubric goals in a way that was personalized to each student. By differentiating her instruction, all the students reached the rubric goals but in a way that worked best for them. She says that before the NB process she would not have worked so hard to make sure each student achieved the goals. Participant 8 (myself) shared her similar thoughts, "I realize now that I need to plan based on the students I

have in my classroom and their needs. I don't plan based on the curriculum map or district timelines. I meet my kids where they are." Participant 10 spoke about her planning and how it tied to her new view on assessment, "I use assessment to better determine student learning on specific goals and do more to adapt my instruction to meet students' needs. I formulate more specific, standards-based rubrics."

**Confidence and motivation.** Many of the teachers grew more confident in their practice and were further motivated to make improvements in the years to come. Participant 5 stated that she grew more confident after achieving and that she felt more competent and trusted her instructional decisions. Participant 8 (myself) agreed and reported,

It was the most challenging thing I've done in my life [working, while attending school, while doing NBPTS] and sometimes I think back to that and say, if I can do that, I can do anything. It gave me confidence to multitask and take on more responsibility.

Two of the participants mentioned how they became more self-motivated than they already were before the NB process. Participant 4 stated, "I was already motivated, but once I learned what I got myself in to, I improved my work ethic and made me more motivated."

The new confidence and motivation that many participants felt after achieving was felt firsthand by participant 7:

Once I became a NBCT, the architecture of teaching was reinforced as I worked with other educators, pre-K–High school. Through opportunities working with other teachers as a mentor and professional development provider, I have broadened my perspective on what good teaching looks like. I became a better writer as a result of going through this process and was more likely to apply for grants and take new risks. Since I could

articulate my practice, I could also advocate more effectively for my students and my colleagues.

**Awareness of practice.** The nine teachers who achieved NB certification were asked more specifically, if they feel as if they have changed due to going through the NB process or whether it just made them aware of the teaching practices they already used. Five of the nine said that the NB process did both of those things. Participant 8 (myself) reported, “I think both. It made me aware of the good things I do, and then changed me to do those things more often.” Participant 12 had a very similar response, “Some of both. I felt like it validated what I already do, but it also made me more intentional about the things that I do.” Participant 7 went into more detail, “The NB process forced me to go back to professional reading with a new eye to make sure what I was doing was best practice so I could justify my teaching decisions in a constructive manner that ensured student growth.” Participant 12 stated, “I am more cognizant of sharing adaptations I make for my students with other teachers in hopes of reaching their students as well. I am also serving on the Tier 1 PBIS team in order to reach more kids.” Three teachers reported that the NB process made them more aware of what they were doing, but did not necessarily change them as an educator. Participant 5 and 6 felt this way as well as Participant 4 who stated, “I don’t think the NB process changed me as a teacher.”

**Areas of improvement.** The NB process also made some teachers more aware of their weaknesses and areas where they should work to improve their practice. Participant 7 mentioned that the NB process, to her, emphasized some areas where she needed to improve, and she made efforts during that year to do so. She learned that she liked some subjects more than others and this led her to become trained in reading recovery. Because of the requirements to show student discourse, Participant 8 (myself) stated that she incorporated more mathematical discourse in her

classroom as well as more group work, which she was previously lacking in her instruction. In addition, Participant 9's mindset about kids changed as she went through the NB process and she said, "My opinion on challenging kids changed from kids being a chore to a challenge, a more positive attitude. I know more about them and how to meet their needs." She realized that she often looked negatively at situations but because of the NB process she has changed to a more positive mindset. Last, Participant 2 stated, "I document much more often now; photos, letters, collecting evidence. You never know when you might need it. I keep logs as well and try to maintain a better organized system of filing and planning."

### **Process Details/Usefulness of the Portfolio Components**

The eight members of the focus group discussion were asked to rank the usefulness of the five components of the NB process. The scale used was 1-most important entry; 5-least important component, and each number one through five was to be used only once and the results are shown in Table 7 below.

| Table 7  |  |    |    |    |    |     |    |     |         |
|--|--|----|----|----|----|-----|----|-----|---------|
| <i>NBPTS: Components</i>   |  |    |    |    |    |     |    |     |         |
| Components of the NB process                                     | Participant Numbers and Response Answers |    |    |    |    |     |    |     | Average |
|  | #2                                       | #4 | #5 | #6 | #7 | #8* | #9 | #12 |         |
| Entry 1: student work analysis                                   | 3  | 1  | 1  | 4  | 2  | 3   | 2  | 1   | 2.1     |
| Entry 2: small group video or demonstrating content knowledge    | 4  | 3  | 2  | 2  | 1  | 2   | 3  | 2   | 2.4     |
| Entry 3: large group video or you demonstrating integration      | 5  | 2  | 3  | 1  | 3  | 1   | 1  | 3   | 2.4     |
| assessment center tests  | 1  | 4  | 5  | 3  | 4  | 5   | 4  | 5   | 3.9     |
| Entry 4: professional development, community work and completion | 2  | 5  | 4  | 5  | 5  | 4   | 5  | 4   | 4.3     |
| <i>Notes: #8* are my own personal ratings.</i>                   |  |    |    |    |    |     |    |     |         |

Table 7 above shows that Entry 1 (student work analysis) was most meaningful to participants and Entry 4 (professional development) was ranked as being the least important entry. It is also important to note that Entries 1-3 were all very important to participants, almost equally so, and that the assessment center exercises as well as Entry 4 were both found to be not as useful to participants and were rated with a four or five by most participants.

### **Recommendations**

All twelve participants (including those who did not finish) were asked if they would recommend the NB process to other teachers, and all twelve said they would, but with some caveats. Five participants said that the teachers should already be effective teachers, be well respected by their peers, and have confidence in their ability as an educator. Participant 5 suggested, “You just know when someone is teaching and they should be [a teacher], and they are good at it. I don’t know how you know, but you just know.” She was implying that these are teachers who should attempt the NB process, and those who are not ready. Two participants mentioned that NBPTS should not be used by teachers to attempt to gain confidence in their teaching, or find out if they are good at their practice, but should be for those who are already proficient and who are looking for recognition.

Ten of the twelve participants in the focus group discussion agreed that this process is not for everyone. Participant 2 stated, “There are some teachers that it’s not for. If you made every teacher complete it, that’s not good. If you don’t have to pay for it, and you get something out of it, then go for it.” Participant 4 made a similar comment and stated, “Yes I would recommend it but it depends on the teacher. I wouldn’t want anyone to go into the NB process blindly, and it would take the right kind of disposition.”

Participant 6 highly recommended the NB process to all teachers who are motivated to complete the work, whether they achieved certification or not she believed the NB process was worth the time. Participant 8 (myself) was also quick to recommend the NB process to teachers, but mentioned that it probably was not best for new teachers or those close to retirement. She stated, “It’s best for anyone in the middle of their career who is looking for a growth experience, or for those who want a challenge.” Three of the participants were part of a school wide Take One! initiative where all educators were asked to complete the Take One! process as part of their professional development that school year. Participant 7 mentioned how that was not successful for some teachers and said, “Some people don’t want others to see their teaching, and you can’t force someone to do it. You need to be fully invested in it. If it’s not your thing it’s ok, they can do something else.” The participants agreed that this process should be recommended for some teachers, those who are good teachers, confident, willing to put in the time, and motivated enough to complete the requirements.

Looking deeper into the participants’ responses to this question, there seemed to be a connection to another research question. Those participants who argued that the NB process could be for everyone were the ones who thought of the NB process as more of a learning opportunity. The participants who saw that the NB process as intended for excellent teachers, were those who thought the NB process was more about the validation of accomplished teaching. For example, the five participants who said that teachers choosing to complete the NB process should already be respected by their peers were also teachers who thought that the NB process was more about recognizing accomplished teachers rather than a growth opportunity. Since many participants believed that the NB process does both, most participants also believed that the NB process could be for everyone if they are in the right mindset to complete it.

## **Suggestions/Recommendations for Those Considering the NB process**

Four out of twelve teachers recommended that teachers contemplating applying for NBPTS certification should have support while working towards certification. The support could come in many forms including a cohort, supportive administration, colleagues who understand the NB process, and/or family/friends who can support along the way. Participant 1 said, “Work with people who are going through the NB process or who have already gone through it and are willing to help you. Without support and guidance I would not have even known where to begin.”

Eight of the twelve teachers recommended that teachers understand completely what they are getting into before they sign up and make a personal completion plan. Participant 4 advised, “Know the requirements, know the time commitments, and know the money requirements.” The participants thought that if those contemplating the NB process better understood what was being asked of them that they would be more successful, or at least know what to expect. Participant 1 stated, “Set goals and break each entry up so it’s not so overwhelming.” Likewise, Participant 2 said, “They have to budget their time. They need a calendar so that they can get this done by this time.” Many of the participants commented that they really do not think people understand how rigorous the NB process is until they are fully involved, but they recommend that those considering it should do as much research and talk to as many people as possible. Participant 8 (myself) summarized the thoughts of many:

Talk to people who have gone through it. Ask them about their benefits and see if you think the time will be worth it. Read and understand the requirements and the standards, understand the architecture of teaching too. Realize the time commitment will be immense. Make a plan to budget your time.

Participant 4 cautioned people from expecting any type of incentive after certification. Some states and districts may offer money, or stipends, but she wanted to make sure that no one went through the NB process for only that reason because the monetary rewards may not be permanent. She stated, “Don’t plan on getting the incentives. If you don’t get any of the money back are you ok with that? I don’t see how people could do it for the money with the way money goes in education.” The last recommendation came from Participant 11 who attempted the NB process but did not complete it. She was not able to put in the amount of time that was required outside of school. Her recommendation was, “I recommend you having already been through grad school, or some sort of continuing education in order to understand the time commitment. I also was not ready for just how critical those evaluating me would be.”

### **Requirement Recommendations**

The nine teachers who certified were asked about the Take One! process that sometimes prefaces a participant’s journey through the full NBPTS process. Take One! requires participants complete one of the four required entries which gives teachers a sample of the required work. These nine teachers were asked if Take One! should be required of teachers before attempting the entire process. All nine of the teachers said that it should not be a requirement and that if teachers want to start with the full process that they should have that option. Some of the participants recommended that Take One! be discussed as an option, but that teachers should be given the choice. Participant 7 went into detail about the benefits of Take One!:

Actually, Take One is also a powerful professional development process even if teachers do not complete the full process, so I see it as a vehicle for teachers to start having more evidence based conversations about their practice and student learning. I think Take One! is a critical option for teachers considering National Board Certification and that most



teachers would benefit from doing it this way, but I don't think it should be required.

Requiring Take One may limit some teachers and unnecessarily limit the ways in which teachers use this process for professional growth. Especially when there is talk that the time to complete the NB process might be extended, teachers need options, not limits.

**Time extensions.** The NB process is meant to be completed in a one year time frame, but for those who do not achieve in that first year they are allowed a second and/or third year to rewrite and resubmit if needed. Similarly, the NB process is often referred to as a three-year process even though some teachers are successful in completing all of the requirements in the first year. The nine teachers who achieved NB certification were asked if the one year timeline for initial submission should be increased to a longer time span. Six of the nine teachers, including Participant 12, answered no to this question, stating that one year is plenty of time to complete the NB process. "The NB process is rigorous, but it should be. Teachers at this level should be able to make it happen. Stretching out the timeline makes it more attainable for the average teacher. NBPTS is not for the average teacher." Participant 9 also agreed that the time span was reasonable, but reminded everyone that, "I don't think the timeline should change for the portfolio entries. Participant 5 stated something similar:

I think teachers would be discouraged to do the NB process if it was extended to longer than a year for initial submission. Teachers just need to realize that they do have three years to achieve, and that it doesn't have to be done in one year. I like that it's crammed in one year so you can focus on one group of kids, one year's worth of lessons and then be done.

Participant 10 thought that there may be some advantages of slightly extending the year long process, but also saw some challenges to this. Participant 10 suggested that teachers be

allowed to submit in the summer as opposed to the spring. The current submission date is in April, but she felt that allowing teachers a couple extra months would be beneficial.

Participant 7 was the only participant who was supportive of the time frame being extended:

Yes, because going through this process prompts teachers to take on new teaching practices, become part of new learning communities with other NBPTS candidates and pushes teachers to be more disciplined in professional reading. If teachers have more time to complete the NB process, it will be more likely that these new teaching practices or dispositions toward teaching become more ingrained in their teaching and ultimately have a greater impact on student learning. However, this is dependent upon a focused process for completing the portfolio and assessment center components so teachers don't delay and hurry to complete everything.

**Logistical suggestions.** Some logistical suggestions were mentioned as a way to improve the NB process. Participant 12 said, "I would extend the page requirements. The way that candidates write in order to fit it in leaves behind quality writing skills that should be a part of being a master teacher. Teachers need to have excellent verbal and written communication skills in order to teach those skills to students. The amount of space allowed for the portfolios does not allow for teachers to showcase those skills." Participant 4 mentioned the cost of the NB process also being something that the NBPTS could address. She stated, "I wish there was a way for the NB process to be cheaper. Even though I got a grant to help, it still put me in debt." Participant 7 suggested that more certificate types be available so more types of educators can achieve certification. She said, "They should expand the certificates to include certificates for other school roles such as Social Workers and Psychologists. There are other new and unique roles in

schools now too that should be considered.” Participant 7 made the last logistical recommendation about submission. She suggested that online submission should be an option (which just recently happened), as well as early submission of the entries as they finish them as opposed to the one due date at the end of the NB process.

**Other suggestions.** More collegial support was mentioned as a recommendation. Participant 5 had two suggestions, “I think more detailed feedback should be given instead of just rubric citation.” Participant 2 suggested “more milestones to help me gauge my progress.”

Assessment center suggestions were mentioned a few times. Participant 8 (myself) mentioned, “I would also recommend that they make the testing center locations more convenient. I had to drive an hour and a half to get to mine and spend the night in a hotel.” Participant 9 thought candidates should have more time to complete the assessment portion of the NB process:

I think it would be fine to have the portfolio entries submitted in the year timeline, but then allow teachers to do the assessment center the following fall. I don’t think teachers have enough time to truly study for the assessment center.

Participant 7 made three further suggestions that involved changing the NB process or adding new components:

I suggest more outreach and awareness opportunities for teachers from all cultural and ethnic backgrounds to learn more about the NB process and to be supported as they are candidates. Also, partner with businesses or use other resources to decrease the cost. A greater network of funding options for teachers at all stages of the NB process would make a difference for many, especially advanced candidates. Lastly, I’m interested in some of the recent NBPTS initiatives that emphasize leading from the classroom, such as

the STEM Master Teacher Corps and the College and Career Ready Classrooms Act. These programs emphasize mentoring and creating new career pathways for teachers while strengthening core classroom instruction. NBPTS continues to stress building educator effectiveness across several levels. It is critical that the certification process continue to be rigorous, but evolve as the profession changes, incorporating more technology, using data to inform instruction more efficiently and reaching students in more effective ways than ever before.

### **Personal Experiences**

Participants were asked some questions about their own personal journey through the NB process. They were asked if it was worth all the time, money, effort, etc. that they put into it. They were also asked if they could have gotten a similar experience by doing some other form of professional development, and finally they were asked for a quote to summarize their experience. Their responses are detailed below.

#### **Worth the Time/Money/Effort**

All twelve participants (achievers and non-finishers) were asked if the NB process was worth the time, money, and effort that they put into it. Eleven of the twelve participants said that it was definitely worth their time and effort. Participant 1 who did not finish the NB process stated, “Learning to be so reflective on my teaching and actually videotaping myself made it worth it.” Participant 9 who did achieve said, “Yes, absolutely. Definitely! I wouldn’t be the teacher I am today. I feel like I just have so much more knowledge. I know what to do better than I did before. I’m not stagnant.”

Participants listed a number of reasons why the NB process was worth everything they put into it. Some of the most common answers were, gaining confidence, a personal sense of

accomplishment, affirmation of being a good teacher, personal and professional growth, assurance of doing a good job, the feeling of being valued, a new perspective on practice, professional connections, becoming more reflective, and becoming more thoughtful about planning. Participant 8 (myself) wrote, “The confidence and assurance that I gained made it worth it. Often in education you wonder if you make a difference. This was nice for someone to say that you are doing a good job.”

There were some discrepancies in whether or not it was worth the money that was put into the NB process, and two different participants mentioned how they wish the cost of the NB process was less including Participant 4:

Yes it was worth the time and effort, it was worth those two things. I wish it wasn't so expensive. It's hard enough to live on a teacher's salary, and you're doing the right thing, extending your own learning and professional experience, then you're asked to pay \$2500 when it's supposed to benefit students.

Participant 11 did not complete the NB process and when asked about the cost she said, “I wish I didn't put my money into it, money that is non-refundable. As a teacher, that money was very valuable since I do not make nearly enough.” Participant 5 did achieve certification, but was not sure if the NB process would have been beneficial had she not achieved and gained the monetary benefits that come along with certification. She said, “Yes it was worth it because I did it and made it. I don't know if I would have the same answer if I didn't achieve. If I wasn't getting any money, it would not have been worth it.”

### **Same Results, Different Experience**

All twelve participants were asked if they thought they could get the same results by doing some other professional development process. Nine of the twelve said that there are no

other professional development opportunities available to them that would have given them the same results that the NB process did. Participant 2's short answer to the question was, "Only if the other process was like this." This is interesting because of the twelve participants; ten have Master's degrees (all nine who achieved certification as well as one participant who did not finish the requirements). Having a master's seemed to correlate highly with success in the NB process, although success is not guaranteed as evidenced by the one participant who had a master's degree, began the process, but did not finish. Additionally, three participants were currently working on Doctoral degrees (all NBCTs), all had attended countless hours of local professional development, eight had attended national conferences, and all twelve at some point in their career had conducted some action research in their classrooms. Their experiences with professional development are diverse.

Participant 4 and Participant 8 were both currently working on their doctorate degrees in the field of education. Participant 4 said that, "The doctoral program is close, because you can study what you want." but Participant 8 (myself) mentioned that even doctoral work was not as challenging or intense as the NB process because it was so much more personal, risky, and life changing. These two participants as well as two others talked about how the NB process was so different because it was shorter than a graduate degree, more intense, and more self-examining. Participant 10 stated, "This was so completely relevant, and it had a direct impact, because it was shorter than a master's and because its way more in depth of even a series of professional development. This improved my overall sense of instruction." All nine of the participants who achieved NB certification had a Master's degree before beginning the NB process so they knew the demands of obtaining an advanced degree. Participant 12 commented on that comparison and stated, "I learned so much more through NB than my classes that I took simultaneously. I don't

feel I could have gotten the same knowledge. It's so practical to what you're doing. It's not a contrived project." Participant 9 also brought up the differences between a graduate program and the NB process:

It's different than a master's, it's so self-examining. In a grad class you're not examining your teaching, you put yourself out there every time you let someone read for you, or watch a video. You let someone examine/analyze you, tell you their thoughts. You don't get that level of questioning in a grad class. Grad school didn't take you away from family engagements, birthdays, traveling for holidays, etc. NB takes every waking moment you have.

Participant 12 felt the same:

A lot of my grad classes that I took at [name of institution extracted] I felt that I could teach myself. I learned so much more through NB than my classes that I took simultaneously. I don't feel I could have gotten the same knowledge. It's not that you're just sitting there taking something in. It's so practical to what you're doing. You take just what you're doing in the classroom. I was taking classes at the same time so I have a good comparison, and NB doesn't even compare.

The comparison of graduate degrees and the NB process was discussed further in the focus group session. "All participants had a master's degree before doing NBPTS. What are your thoughts on that?" Participant 2 spoke first and shared that having a master's degree helped him know how to mentally prepare for the work as well as write professionally. He said, "I was in the mind frame of doing it, and it helps you know how to write it out." Participant 7 disagreed with the writing comment and stated, "The kind of writing you do with NB is different than a master's" but agreed that having been through graduate school does help you know what to

expect in regards to the time commitment. Participant 12 spoke last on this topic and went into detail about her master's degree capstone experience because it was very much aligned to the NB process. She stated, "They structured the class projects to mirror the NB projects. Doing the master's program gives you the skills to be a better teacher, which is what you need to become NB certified."

Overwhelming, the most common reason why no other form of professional development could provide the same results as the NB process was because it was a personalized process. Participant 5 said, "This was more personalized [than any other available professional development] and would help me improve my day to day classroom practices." One participant is a physical education teacher who teaches ninety students in a gym at one time, another one is a teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing who teaches in small groups, and other participants range from teaching Kindergarten to high school. Everyone felt their classroom was unique, and having such a personalized professional development process could not be replicated. Another unique part of the NB process, mentioned by five participants, was the ongoing support. Participant 4 said, "Through conferences and professional development, no way. It's usually snapshot or piecemeal. NBPTS is so in depth and intense and it took nearly an academic year to complete." Participant 7 mentioned that with this process teachers not only look at their own teaching, but also at other people's teaching and that aspect is rare to find with other forms of professional development. Participant 10 mentioned how the NB process made her prove herself in broad areas (content knowledge, community connections, and pedagogies) and yet it was also incredibly specific, "all of the aspects cannot be found in any other professional development program."



Participants 5 and 6 thought they could get the same kind of results by doing something other than the NB process. Participant 5 suggested that the Take One! process could possibly give some similar results because it is as personalized and applicable as the full NBPTS process. She felt that the best parts of the NB process were the videotaping and reflection, and those are part of Take One!. She said, "I have no problem taking some and leaving the rest in terms of professional development, but NB is so personalized. It's about me; it's very self-centered, professional process. The most useful parts were the taping, viewing, and reflecting." Participant 6 agreed, but thought that she could get some of the same results by doing an equally personal action research in her classroom. She would incorporate the same tasks as the NB process such as videotaping, analyzing student work, and using the architecture of teaching, but would just conduct her own self-analysis. She believed she could get some of the benefits of the NB process, but not all. She said, "I probably could have gained the same knowledge from action research in my classroom. Looking at how interactive journals could affect motivation of students for example, but I could not have gained the professionalism."

### **Lack of Completion**

The three participants who began the NB process but did not finish, were asked what made them decide not to continue. Participant 1 was offered a different professional development opportunity that she was more excited about and decided to pursue that route instead. She said, "It was a once in a lifetime opportunity. The subject area knowledge and training techniques I learned and am still learning have greatly impacted my teaching and made me a much better, more knowledgeable teacher." Participant 11 went through the Take One! process the year before she began the full NBPTS process. She got her Take One! score in November, was very disappointed, and that plus lack of time were the two reasons that she did not complete the NB

process. Participant 3 also struggled with the time commitment required to complete the NB process and was uncertain what she would gain besides a title. She stated, “I could not justify using the precious little free time I have for family. It felt like I was only doing it for the status and peer pressure and I just didn’t think those were good enough reasons.”

### **Quotes to Summarize NBPTS**

During the focus group, the nine teachers who achieved certification were asked to summarize their journey through the NB process with a short quote. Two of the nine chose not to answer this question and the other responses are listed below:

- “My teaching has a newfound urgency as a result of going through the NB process. Every day, I reflect on what my students learned, emphasizing the impact my teaching had on student performance that day. This reflection pushes me to differentiate more effectively and scaffold instruction since my instruction must positively impact every child each day. Once I became an NBCT, the architecture of teaching was reinforced as I worked with other educators, pre-K–High school. Through opportunities working with other teachers as a mentor and professional development provider, I have broadened my perspective on what good teaching looks like.”
- “I will always remember the Architecture of Accomplished Teaching. What do I know about my kids, setting specific goals, formative assessment, reflecting, analyzing, and setting new goals.”
- “If it was easy then everyone would do it.” –participant’s father
- “You can measure opportunity with the same yardstick that measures the risk involved. They go together.” – Earl Nightingale
- “It was stressful, intensive, but well worth it.”

- “I’d say it was one of the most helpful, meaningful, and professional experiences of my teaching career.”
- “Rewarding.”

### Summary Figures

Figures 2, 3, and 4 summarize the findings in this chapter. The categories on each chart are the emerging themes that came from the interview data, and the pie chart data was collected during the focus group survey.

Figure 2

*NBPTS: Motivation*

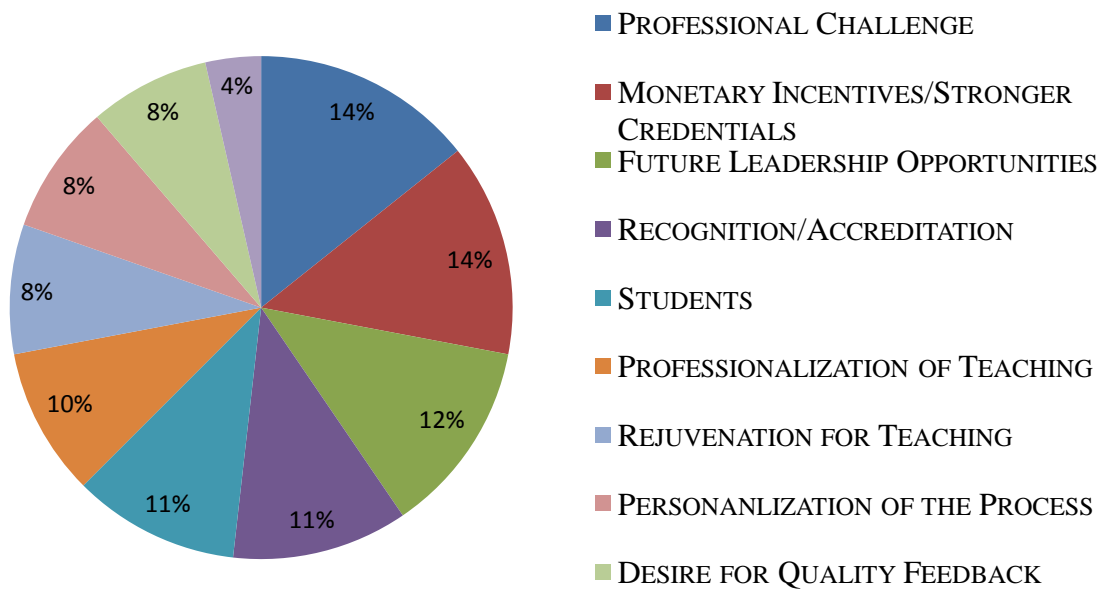


Figure 3

*NBPTS: Benefits*

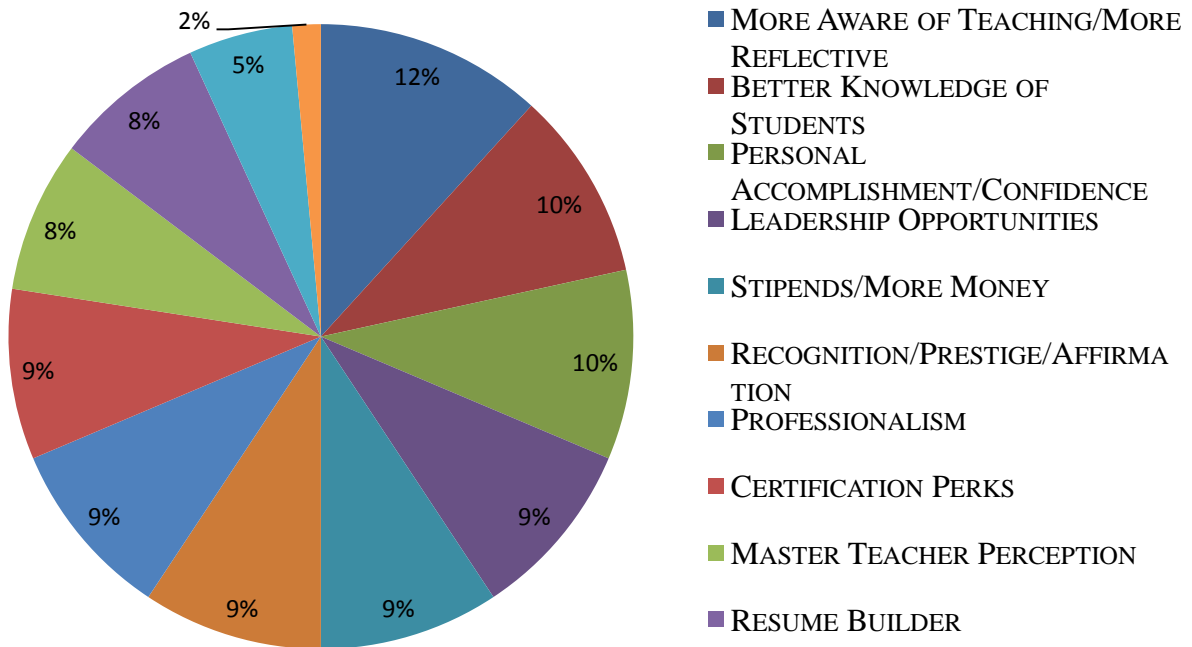
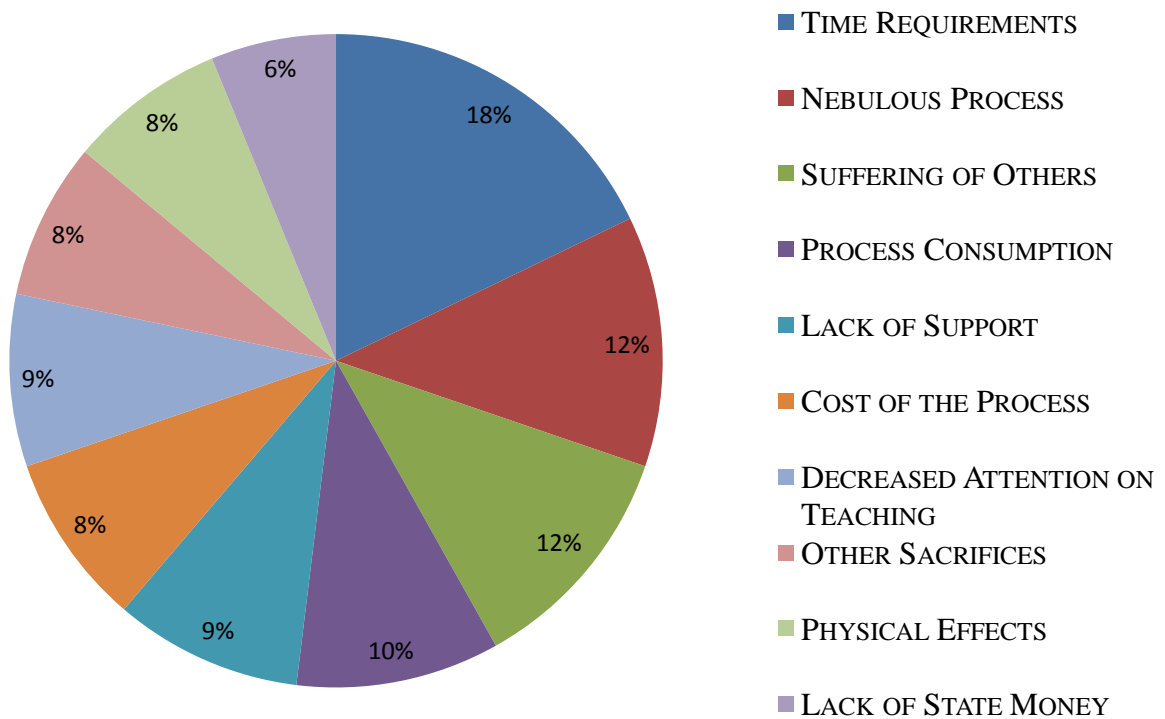


Figure 4

*NBPTS: Burdens*



These diagrams indicate that the motivations, benefits, and burdens of the NB process for individuals were varied. While there are some areas stronger than others, they are not pervasive when indicated by rankings on the survey. Overall there were no really dominant themes or consistent findings across all participants. There was considerable agreement among the participants across the interviews, when asked on the survey to rank order them, the findings are dispersed and more equal than different.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Interpretations, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

Teaching is challenging, and identifying effective teachers is arguably as challenging. Teacher evaluation is currently a hot topic in education and there are hearty disagreements about the most effective way to measure teacher effectiveness in the classroom (Kane, McCaffrey, Miller & Staiger, 2013). Illinois Senate Bill 7 has posed even more challenges to districts in regards to including student achievement data as part of teacher evaluations. This is different than how most teachers have been evaluated in the past, which was mainly through classroom observations. Many district administrators in Illinois have chosen a model similar to the Charlotte Danielson's frameworks of teaching to assess teacher effectiveness. To the surprise of many, her ideas on teacher evaluation differ from the standard use of achievement test data, and include four categories (a) meaningful planning and preparation; (b) positive and supportive classroom environment; (c) effective instruction; and (d) professional responsibilities (The Danielson Group, 2013). These align closely with the goals of the National Board of Professional Standards. The NBPTS Architecture of Teaching similarly asks teachers to (a) know your students; (b) set high worthwhile goals; (c) implement instruction; (d) evaluate student learning; (e) reflect on student learning and effectiveness; and (f) set new goals for your students (NBPTS, 2013).

This research investigated two questions: What motivates teachers to complete the National Board process? What benefits and burdens do they face by going through the requirements? The research is important because if the NBPTS is effective in identifying effective teachers, this could help district leaders develop evaluative models to assess teacher effectiveness, one that incorporates student work. It is also important for district leaders (as well

as parents) to know who is effective in the classroom. The purpose of this study was to explore why the participants in this study chose to do this kind of voluntary evaluative process in hopes to learn what motivates them and what they considered the benefits and burdens of the process.

## **Discussion**

The National Board process is seen by many educators as a way to grow professionally. Amongst all the different professional development options available, teachers often choose this process as a way to reflect upon and further develop their practice. Many teachers are choosing this comprehensive approach to professional development that includes many components such as reflection, peer collaboration, study groups, portfolios, and lesson study. Teachers are learning and growing from this process and find the outcomes valuable. Better understanding teachers' journeys through this process can provide valuable information on teacher professional development in general. Details of the two research questions are represented in charts and dialogue in this discussion section.

### **Motivation to Complete Process, Benefits, and Burdens**

Using the research detailed in Chapter 2 and the study results in Chapter 4, I created Table 8. The table is organized into two sections--one containing claims about the value of NBPTS (from my participants) and the other shows claims from critics (gathered from the literature review). I first listed the statements that came up in my research, followed by a number ranging from 0 to 3. This number is an average from the participants' scores when asked how much of a positive/negative this particular statement was in their journey (0 meaning not a factor, 3 meaning a strong factor). Other statements are followed by at least one researcher who has made this claim about the NBPTS. The last few statements (five to six on each list) are items that came from the data in my study.

Table 8

*Supports and Critics of NBPTS*

| Supporters of the NBPTS  | Critics of the NBPTS  |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Makes teachers more reflective and purposeful about instruction by focusing 100% on student needs, assisting teachers with diverse classrooms. Supports knowledge growth of students (2.4) (Goldhaber and Anthony, 2004).</li> <li>2. NBPTS certifies the top 3% in the field. Thought of as the ultimate achievement in teaching (2) (NBPTS, 2013).</li> <li>3. Accreditation, honor, recognition, prestige and a sense of accomplishment felt by those who achieve (1.9).</li> <li>4. Helps professionalize teaching, people take you more seriously, master teacher perception (1.9) (NBPTS, 2013).</li> <li>5. There are monetary incentives in some states and districts once a teacher achieves. Financial support for the NB process is also available (1.9).</li> <li>6. There are certification perks such as renewal options, longer term, and transferability between states (1.8).</li> <li>7. Passing means stronger credentials and potential leadership opportunities/jobs available (1.6) (Clotfelter et al., 2007; Bond et al., 2000; Yankelovich, 2001).</li> <li>8. NBPTS is unlike any other professional development. It is personal, self-examining, intensive, and comprehensive (1.4) (NBPTS, 2013).</li> <li>9. Some say it is worth the money and effort even if you do not pass because it enables teachers to find areas of improvement and become more reflective (Hayden, 2007).</li> <li>10. Teachers are more willing to experiment in the classroom, and they gained confidence, appreciated a community of discourse, valued their practice, and provided better assessments and feedback (Van Driel, Beijaard, and Verloop, 2001).</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It takes countless hours to complete the writing, cohort sessions take time, and possible travel time as well (2.3).</li> <li>2. Nebulous process, lack of direction, tedious requirements such as font size, page numbers, organization of entries, specific writing style, etc. (1.6).</li> <li>3. The NB process consumes a person, sacrifices must be made, and they lose sight of other things. Family, friends, and students may suffer due to cut backs of other commitments (1.5).</li> <li>4. The NB support provided can be limited or non-existent. Other support (administrator, family, friends, and colleagues) may be non-existent as well. Collaboration is not required (1.2).</li> <li>5. Decreased attention on teaching (1.1).</li> <li>6. Depending on financial assistance, it could be very expensive. There could also be material and travel costs (1.1).</li> <li>7. Psychological risk of putting yourself out there. Physical effects such as loss of sleep and stress (1).</li> <li>8. Some states and districts do not offer incentives, and those that do are subject to change at any time (0.8).</li> <li>9. It is argued that the NB process does not create better teachers or help them improve, it just certifies them. So if a teacher wants to improve, this process is not a good fit (Freund, Russell, and Kavulic, 2005).</li> <li>10. The grading is subjective and possibly biased. Certification is all based on the score, not a growth model (Freund et al., 2005).</li> <li>11. It could be seen as an ego booster since teachers are just writing about themselves. Teachers could be considered doing it only for the incentives (Goldhaber and Anthony, 2004; Harris and Sass, 2007).</li> </ol> |



| Table 8 (cont.)  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>Supports and Critics of NBPTS</i>   |   |
| Supporters of the NBPTS  | Critics of the NBPTS  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. It can be linked to school reform, is closely aligned with district/state evaluation tools, certification helps with evaluation (Guskey, 1995).</li> <li>12. NB strengthens practice and increases student achievement by developing effective teachers (Park et al., 2007).</li> <li>13. NBCTs stay in the field of education longer and encourage others to complete the NB process (Sykes, et al., 2006)</li> <li>14. Support is available in cohorts, but not required. Family, friends, and colleagues, can also support. Allows for collaboration.</li> <li>15. Gives teachers a common language and the NB process encourages networking and creates lasting relationships.</li> <li>16. Available for anyone and is customizable. It can be used as professional development, used to rejuvenate teachers, or to affirm good teaching.</li> <li>17. It is not a one shot deal, is a 3-year process, and teachers use the skills in years after.</li> <li>18. Level of participation is high, based on active learning.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. If a teacher achieves, he/she may be assigned more work or transfer into a leadership job (Freund et al., 2005).</li> <li>13. No one is guaranteed to pass, and if not it is argued that you gain nothing and wasted time and money.</li> <li>14. Process is not for everyone (3+ years of teaching, those who are already confident/proficient, certificate not offered).</li> <li>15. It is just one of many available professional development options and certification renewal options. There are potential opportunity costs, meaning the loss of potential gain from an alternative professional development.</li> <li>16. No feedback is provided during the NB process and very little at the end.</li> <li>17. Must have some technology skills to complete the taping, editing, and writing.</li> <li>18. Teachers must be individually driven to complete the requirements, and to make the NB process ongoing in the years after completion.</li> </ul> |

The information from Table 8 was used to create the constructed composite dialogue below between four classroom teachers and one administrator. Renee is an NBCT who is mentoring another teacher through the NB process. The teacher she is mentoring through the NB process is named Eli and he is a Special Education teacher in his ninth year of teaching. He just finished his Master's Degree one year ago and is looking to take the next step in his career. They are watching one of his videos after school one day and the following conversation takes place.

Eli: I think this clip is good because it shows a lot of student led discourse. I also feel that I did a good job asking leading questions to promote student thinking.

Renee: I agree. This video really captures the amount of thought you put into this lesson and how it meets the needs of your particular students.

Eli: This process has really taught me to be purposeful about my instruction. I really have gotten to know my students this year and understand their needs better than I have in the past. I think it helps me plan more effective lessons and reach all of my students.

Renee: That's great! Keep that in mind if you don't pass. You've already gotten something out of the NB process! You are equipped with knowledge that will make you a stronger teacher, to plan better lessons, and to reflect and make improvements.

Eli: Right, but I really want to achieve certification. My main goal in going through the NB process is to pass. I want the stronger credentials so that hopefully down the road I can become the Special Education Director at the district level. I think achieving NB certification will open up a variety of leadership roles in the future.

Renee: I understand completely. I think this certification plus your Master's Degree will give you a leg up for that position when it opens up. Achieving NB is thought of by many of us NBCTs as the ultimate achievement in teaching. As an NBCT I feel that people value my opinion more than before; I have that Master Teacher perception. NB is really starting to help professionalize teaching.

At that time, two other teachers walk in. Joel is a Social Studies teacher who is considering the NB process. He has been teaching for 10 years and already has a Master's Degree. Danica is a Mathematics teacher who began the NB process last year but did not finish. She has been teaching five years and does not yet have a Master's Degree. She quit the NB process halfway through because she did not feel ready.

Danica: Eli, did I just hear you say that you're leaving us for a new position?!

Eli: No, I was talking about how my Master's Degree and hopefully my NB certification will enable me to take on more leadership roles in the future.

Danica: That's one of the reasons I quit the NB process! I have enough on my plate as it is, I don't want to be asked to do more just because I've been recognized as an effective teacher!

Renee: Oh come on, it's not that bad! You are already respected in the building and take on a lot of work as it is. You can always say no to requests for extra work.

Danica: I know, I was kidding. I really do think the NB process is great. I just wasn't ready for it. I needed to get in the mindset of being a learner again, and find time each week to focus on professional development. That's one of the reasons I like the Master's Program I am in now. We meet two nights a week and we are not allowed to miss class. The flexibility of the NB process was not for me. I need more structure.

Joel: I already have my Master's and am thinking about doing NB certification too. What are some of the other reasons you quit, Danica? Or Eli, what are some of your struggles as you are going through it now? I'm really trying to do my research before jumping in to such a large commitment.

Danica: I just couldn't find the time. It takes so much time to record your teaching, watch the videos, write and edit the entries, and attend the cohort sessions. I didn't realize what I was getting myself into.

Eli: It is time consuming, but I love that it is flexible. You can attend as many or few of the cohort sessions as you'd like. You can have readers read your writing via email, meet them in person, or neither. The NB process allows for collaboration but does not require it. I can work on my entries late at night, early in the morning before school, and even on the weekends. With my busy schedule, I love the flexibility.

Danica: Yeah I can see how with your busy schedule that you'd appreciate that. I just didn't see how this process was better than other professional development available.

Renee: There are numerous professional development options for teachers, but none like NBPTS. It is unlike anything available because it is so comprehensive. It encompasses all aspects of teaching including content, pedagogy, assessment, reflection, and so much more. You will get a lot out of your Master's Degree program, Danica, which has some similarities to NB such as a salary increase and knowledge about how to become a better educator.

Danica: The NB definitely is a unique process. But it's so expensive. I did not get any state or federal funding so I had to pay over \$2000 out of pocket, plus pay for supplies to organize my work and gas money to travel to cohort meetings. I thought maybe it would be worth it in the end because our district offers monetary benefits for NBCTs, but passing isn't guaranteed. Plus, with the way money goes in education who knows how long that stipend is going to be there, and some states/districts offer nothing. If you do pass, the district reimburses you the costs and gives you the annual stipend, so that's good. With my Master's program I am getting financial aid and the salary increase is guaranteed.

Joel: Well I don't want to complete it just for the money, although that will be a nice bonus. My certificate expires in a few years and I know that if I pass it will give me a longer-term certificate. It will also enable me to teach in any state, which is good because someday I'd like to move closer to my family.

Danica: To be honest, I went through it because I wanted to feel a sense of accomplishment and be recognized for the hard work that I do. Seeing Renee complete the NB process and achieve, I was jealous. I work hard too and wanted the same sense of recognition.

Eli: I felt the same way. I wanted the recognition too. There are a lot of teachers out there who work hard and who aren't appreciated for their hard work. I think more people should complete the NB process to get this honor.

Renee: Be careful, the NB process isn't for everyone.

Joel: "It's not?"

Renee: The NB process is available for everyone, yes, but it takes a special kind of teacher to complete the NB process, and the NB has a requirement that a teacher has to have taught for three or more years. A lot of NBCTs say that the NB process is best suited for those who are already confident in their practice and proficient in their teaching.

Danica: See, I wasn't confident. I think my Master's Degree program will make me grow as an educator and build my confidence to a level where I'll be ready for the NB process.

Joel: What are some other complaints about the NB process?

Eli: Being in the NB process right now, I love the high level of participation and how active my learning is. But one downside is that the NB process consumes you. I know you have two kids and a wife at home, and you will have to make some sacrifices in order to find the time needed for this process.

Joel: Do you feel that I will learn a lot from it, or just document what I do and get recognized for doing so?

Renee: I did learn to be more reflective in my practice and more purposeful in my planning, but overall I think it's a certification process as opposed to a growth model. This is debatable though as some people feel that it creates effective teachers.

Danica: Even though I didn't finish, I agree with Renee. I felt like I was just documenting what I was doing in the classroom. I wasn't learning new things like I am now in my Master's

Degree program. I began to think of the NB process as more like an ego booster since it was so focused on praising me for what I already do.

Eli: One thing the NB process has done for me is to make me more willing to experiment in the classroom, trying out new lessons and activities. I've gained confidence to try these and have also become better at writing assessments and giving meaningful feedback. While I was already fairly confident about those things before NB, I definitely am more confident now. Something else to consider, Joel, is that our administration here is really supportive. They don't seem to know much about the details of the NB process, but they are supportive by providing me with writing days and recognizing me at staff meetings. The NB process aligns with their school reform efforts and also is closely aligned to our evaluation tool so they think it's great for teachers to do.

Joel: That's great advice, Eli. I will put more thought into whether or not the benefits of the NB process outweigh the burdens before I make my decision.

Danica: Good choice, Joel. Make sure you are ready. I think I will finish my graduate program and then consider the NB process.

Renee: NBCTs are known to stay in the field of education for a long time so I'll probably still be here when you decide to go through. I'll support you along the way, Joel and Danica, whenever you're ready!

Danica and Joel: Thanks! See you both later.

This dialogue was constructed based on the data from this study. Teachers are learning more about the NB process through word of mouth, they are asking questions to determine if the NB process is for them, and they are weighing the pros and cons to determine whether or not the NB process is worthwhile for them. There are more and more teachers becoming NB certified

each year and the total hit 100,000 in 2013. The participants in this study were already committed to the field of education and used the NB process as a way to improve their practice, gain rejuvenation for their jobs, and/or as a way to earn recognition. Listening to NBCTs and inquiring about their journeys through the NB process can help us learn a lot learned about their motivations, as well as the benefits and burdens.

### **Findings/Conclusions**

As detailed in Chapter 2 there are numerous characteristics of effective professional development (National Staff Development Council, 2009). Detailed below is how the NBPTS fits into each of those categories and what makes it unique when compared to the other forms of professional development available. Also previously detailed were the major approaches to professional development available to teachers. The NBPTS touches on almost all of the forms available, making it a very unique form of professional development for educators.

### **Characteristics of Effective Professional Development**

As detailed in Chapter 2, there are four major characteristics of effective professional development. The NBPTS can be described using these four characteristics, depending on how educators use the NB process. The first is that the professional development is linked to and supported by the school/curricular reform that is currently in place in a school (Guskey, 1995). These school goals could or could not be tied to the NB process based on how the candidate completes the entries. For example, if the school's efforts are to promote literacy and increase reading scores, candidates could focus their attention on literacy in their classrooms. They could also choose not to make these connections. Math teachers for example, could complete the NB process entirely without a focus on classroom literacy, and in this case it would not be connecting the NBPTS to the school's reform efforts.

The second component of effective professional development is that the NB process is collaborative (Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 1995; Garrett et al., 2001). Again, the NBPTS can be a collaborative process, but collaboration is not required. The NB process requires active learning from each participant, but it can be completed without any collaboration. This is very unlikely as most candidates have a cohort support group they attend regularly. Participants choose how collaborative they want the NB process to be, how many cohort sessions they want to attend, how many candid conversations they want to have with colleagues, and the amount of time they spend sharing their work with others.

The third component of effective professional development is that the NB process is continuous (Fiszer, 2004). This too is up to the candidate and how they use the NB process in the future after certification. The NB process takes between one and three years to complete, but then the candidate has the option to continue to use what they have learned in their subsequent teaching. It seems that the participants in this study are still very active in the NB process even after certification because they are mentors, recruiters, or still think in terms of the Architecture of Teaching, but it should be noted that the NB process could be considered as non-continuous if a participant makes it that way.

The last component of effective professional development is that it focuses on both content and pedagogical knowledge (Cohen & Hill, 2001; Garrett et al., 2001). While NBPTS has components that test candidates' content and pedagogical knowledge, it is not clear whether or not the NB process teaches new content and pedagogies. In this study, participants ranked the assessment center exercises (which tests content) as one of the least important components, stating that they did not get much out of this portion. Teachers claimed that they were encouraged to study their content area for these exercises, but other than testing teacher



knowledge, the NBPTS is not focused on teaching new content. This component, like the other three, is dependent on the candidate's choices in completing the NB process. They may study new teaching styles and content and incorporate those into their teaching, but they could also just be documenting what they already do.

### **Major Approaches of Professional Development**

Many forms of professional development (detailed in Chapter Two) can be part of the NB process for candidates, while other forms can be incorporated if chosen. One frequent comment from my participants was that the NB process was like no other form of professional development available to them, in other words, nothing else was as comprehensive as NBPTS. It is possible that the participants felt this way because the NB process combines many of the less comprehensive alternative forms of professional development that are available. Figure 5 shows which professional development options are embedded in the NB process, and which could be incorporated.

Figure 5

*Comprehensiveness of NBPTS*

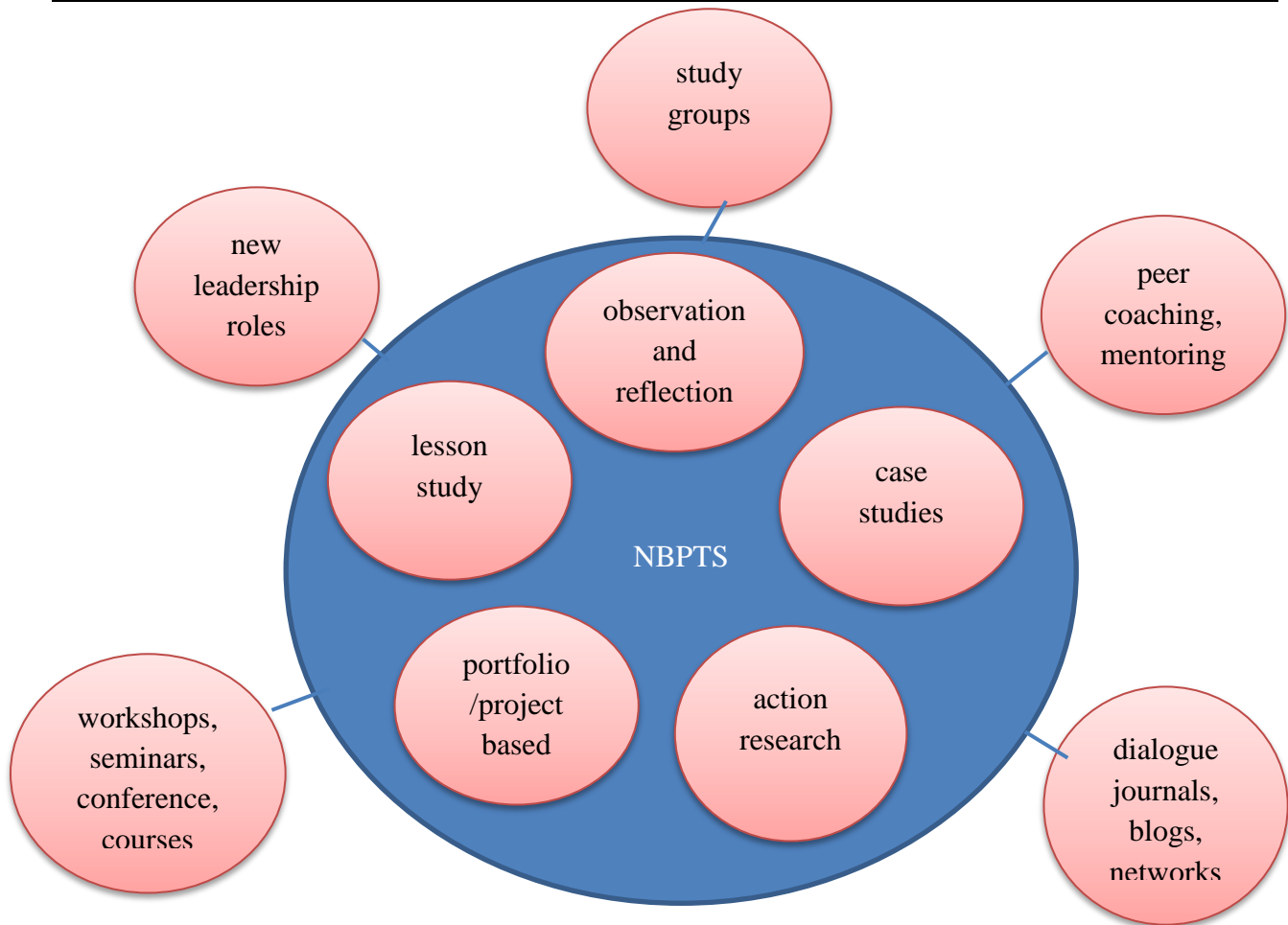


Table 1 in Chapter Two included descriptions of eleven of the most popular forms of professional development, one of them being the NBPTS. Looking closer at the other ten on the list, they can all be found as parts of the NBPTS. Peer coaching (Darling-Hammond, 1997) and mentoring was the first category, which is done through cohorts in the NB process. These often occur informally between NBCTs in buildings as well as by readers provided by state funding.

Study groups (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009) are a second type of professional development available to teachers; this is also closely related to the cohort groups of the NBPTS. These study groups typically focus on curriculum selection, the analysis of teaching, and

evaluating teachers' work. The third option is dialogue journals, blogs, or networks (Peyton, 1993). The NBPTS creates a network of NBCTs that have a common language and teaching practices. There are online resources and blogs available. The entries teachers write for NBPTS are like a personal classroom narrative such as a blog.

Next there are portfolios or project-based professional development options (Diaz-Maggioli, 2003). The NB process requires teachers to complete four portfolios, documenting their work, and analyzing student work, which set the teacher up to become an independent learner. The fifth professional development option is action research or self-directed development (Noffke, and Stevenson, 1995; Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999.) This is at the heart of the NB process. It involves teachers diagnosing a situation, reflecting on that diagnosis, and carrying out a plan for improvement. Next were lesson studies ([www.rbs.org](http://www.rbs.org), 2012) and then reflective observation/supervision. These are incorporated into NBPTS through classroom video analysis (Bellingham Public Schools, 2006). A teacher completes two formal lesson studies when he/she does the video analysis and collaborates with the cohort group to while focus on student thinking.

The eighth option is workshops, seminars, conferences, and/or courses (Mertens and Flowers, 2004). Many universities give college credit hours for those who pass NB certification, and the organization also holds annual conferences and workshops specifically for NBCTs.

Next on the list is a case study (Hamilton, 2011), which is the focus of entry one. Teachers have to collect student work samples, use real classroom lessons, and show how they meet the needs of diverse learners.

Last on the list is taking on new leadership roles (Hickey and Harris, 2005). Many of the participants in the study mentioned how once they achieved certification they were given more

responsibility, had moved into leadership jobs, and that their opinions were valued more by administration as well as fellow teachers.

### **Motivation, Collaboration, and Relevance**

This study was conducted with just a few NBCTs, yet it provides some important information. First, it provides insights into the motivations of teachers to complete the NB process as well as the benefits and burdens that they encounter. Second, the importance of collaboration in education was emphasized, as well as the importance of relevant professional development. The findings of this study may be helpful not only educators, but administration and those concerned with what motivates teachers to improve their practice.

### **Motivation, Benefits, and Burdens**

From this study, I found that teachers in this study were motivated by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors as shown in Figure 6. Most wanted to grow as professionals and valued the accreditation as well as the monetary incentives. This suggests that professional development opportunities may need many of these aspects to be attractive to educators. This may be why some professional development opportunities are not appreciated by many educators because even though they offer intrinsic motivation, they lack the extrinsic ones. Or the opposite could be true for those that are meaningless but come with stipends. Those who develop professional development opportunities for teachers should keep this in mind and design professional development offerings to have both factors, being careful not to make the extrinsic motivators so dominant that teachers complete it solely for that reason. Offer to pay teachers for their time, offer a substitute teacher for the teacher during the training, provide food, offer board credit hours, give participants useful take home materials such as books or manipulatives, or give a special certification. While teachers in this study were intrinsically motivated, and do want to

grow professionally, most were equally interested in extrinsic motivators as well such as monetary compensation.

Figure 6

*Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivators of NBPTS*

### Intrinsic Motivators of NBPTS

- grow as a professional (more aware/reflective)
- professional challenge
- potential leadership opportunities
- students/rejuvenation for teaching
- professionalism
- change in or strengthening of teaching practices

### Extrinsic Motivators of NBPTS

- accreditation/recognition
- credentials (resume builder, longer certificate)
- monetary incentives such as district stipends
- college credit hours

Teachers went through the NB process for a variety of reasons, but one of the most interesting ones was that they wanted the professional challenge. In my experience very few professional development opportunities are considered as a challenge for teachers. Most of them just require you sign up, attend, and everyone leaves with a certificate of completion and new knowledge, or not. Or a teacher buys a book, reads it, tries out some of the suggestions in class, and hopes to be a better educator because of it. In my opinion, the NB process is different because not everyone is guaranteed to pass. Not many educators complete it, grow from it, and then are satisfied with not passing. They want to achieve certification, not just grow from the professional development opportunity. The NB process is different because it is not attainable for all educators, thus posing a challenge for those who attempt. Maybe more professional

development should be more challenging, be offered as a choice, and come with monetary compensation.

It was interesting to find that there was not one primary benefit that teachers reported. Multiple participants described multiple benefits, and even when asked to rank them in order of importance, the data were dispersed. Some benefits were only beneficial later, like potential leadership opportunities for example. Other benefits included changes in teaching practices and the longevity of those changes for years after completion, but these were hard to determine as solely created by NBPTS. Strengthening practice and credentials were benefits that these teachers would realize after many years.

One of the main motivators for going through the NB process was that these teachers wanted a professional growth experience and many commonalities existed within their experiences, but the benefits gained differed. This is the exact opposite of the burdens of the NB process, as the time it took to complete it was overwhelmingly the number one burden reported.

### **Collaboration**

Even though one participant completed the NB process on her own, all of the other participant in the study spoke of the importance of collaboration. Several participants made collaboration a priority and thrived because of it. The participant that did not have collaboration looks back on her experience and states that the hardest part of the journey was that she did it alone. None of the participants thought collaboration should be a requirement, but they all understood the importance of it during a professional development experience.

It was interesting that no one mentioned the online support that the NB provides for its candidates. There are blogs and other online resources available for use, but everyone in this study focused on the importance of the face-to-face time. The fact that it was ongoing, and that

someone was there to help throughout the entire process was a common thread across participant interview responses. Most other forms of professional development do not have that option. They provide someone at the beginning, and sometimes at the end, but never throughout. Not only was it ongoing, but also it was flexible. Participants could collaborate as little or as much as they wanted to, and could change their level of collaboration throughout the NB process based on their need. These are two unique characteristics to the NB process.

### **Relevance/Significance**

A takeaway from this study is that professional development experiences for teachers should be personalized to their particular needs. Many other professional development opportunities for teachers are prepackaged, or are geared towards specific subject areas, or for teachers at the beginning of their careers, or a variety of other targeted groups. The NBPTS is different because it has every teacher focus on themselves and their students. No teacher can claim that it is not relevant to their practice, because all the work they did for this process was directly related to the particular kids they teach and the way they teach them. The individualistic approach is unique and teachers appreciated the relevance.

Because the NB process has teachers look at each of their students individually and get to know student needs on a personal level, it helps teachers teach in the diverse classrooms that are now commonplace. If this process made teachers more sensitive to diversity and provided them with a framework to meet the needs of all of their students, the aspects of the NB process that promoted these benefits should be incorporated into all professional development opportunities. If all teachers were sensitive to diversity and felt confident meeting the needs of their particular group of students, it could have major implications for student learning across the nation.

The main reason this study is significant is because it provides insiders' perspectives about the NB process. This is very useful for outsiders who are considering the NB process and want to better understand the commitment before signing up. They can look at the benefits, burdens, and what teachers get out of the NB process to better determine if it is something they would be interested in completing. Before this study, potential participants would be able to look at the requirements detailed by the NBPTS, but there were few sources from those who have actually gone through the process. This study is a glimpse into the NB process from some insiders.

Another reason this study is significant is because we now better understand why some teachers choose to complete the NB process. Understanding their reasoning is beneficial to the NBPTS, NBCTs, and district leaders so that they can successfully encourage other teachers to attempt the NB process. This study is also significant to other professional development providers because it shows what aspects of professional development teachers find most beneficial such as intrinsic and extrinsic takeaways for participants. Professional development providers could look at these participants' journeys through the NB process and attempt to pull out the beneficial components, and minimize the burdens in attempt to make a comprehensive and meaningful experience for teachers.

This study also provides a lot of feedback for NBPTS to consider. They could look at these data to get a better sense of the professional development opportunity that they are providing for teachers. This is especially important because NB developers are currently making many changes in their requirements. They could also look at the burdens that are imposed on teachers as they are going through the NB process and see if there are ways to alleviate the burdens or make them less impactful.



### **Suggestions for Future Research**

While a lot of data were collected in this study, and the main research questions were addressed, there are still many questions about the NB process that could be further studied.

### **Suggestions for Practice**

Currently the certification process is a standalone program that is not tied to evaluation or college degree programs. Since many current evaluation systems are intended to include student achievement, offering the NB process as an optional part of teachers' evaluation system should be considered. Those who achieve certification might be excused from the school evaluation system for the next cycle? Or those who receive a 'needs improvement' or 'unsatisfactory' rating could be coached by peers to incorporate some of the components into their teaching? Because the NB process is similar to many evaluation systems, districts could consider tying them together in some way.

NBPTS organization should consider how they market the NB process and if there is a better way to do so. Most of the participants in this study knew very little about the NB process before they began, administrators seem uninformed, and without a strong network of NBCTs spreading the word there does not seem to be a way for teachers to learn about the NB process. It is interesting to note that many teachers are willing to complete the NB process even without knowing much about it. The NBPTS may want to consider coming to schools to do seminars, or contacting district administration to propose ways to integrate the NB process into school improvement days, or even working with colleges to let future teacher teachers know about the NB process. If people knew more about the NB process they might be more willing to apply, gaining the benefits that the NB process has to offer.

## **Research Suggestions**

Mentioned briefly in Chapter Two was that the NB process may distract teachers from their students the year they complete the certification. This was briefly captured in this study, but more research is needed. The participants in this study were more willing to try out new lessons and experiment with new ideas during the NB process, but they also mentioned being more tired and stressed at the same time. Does their attempt at being progressive outweigh the burdens in doing so? How do similar progressive teachers compare to those not going through the NB process?

There are numerous changes coming in the NBPTS process as per their website, which are needed as the process has not changed much in the last 25 years. They claim by 2017 the NB process will be “more affordable, more accessible, and more efficient.” One of those changes that occurred during the 2012-2013 school year was that candidates had the option of submitting their portfolio entries online rather than mailing them in a box. Other changes will be to make the NB process more teacher-directed. Researchers could study the policies that led to these changes, and how these changes will affect the NB process in the future. My data suggests that the NB process is already beneficial for teachers, so looking at whether the changes add to the value of the NB process or not would be valuable.

Something interesting I found during my study was that every candidate who went through the NB process and achieved certification already had a Master’s Degree. Two of the three that started the NB process but did not finish did not have Master’s Degrees. I wonder what percent of those who are certified also have advanced degrees. If this is a consistent finding, what is it about a graduate degree that prepares teachers for NBPTS? Or is it just because those teachers have been teaching longer and have more experience and confidence? Researchers

could look at the correlation between what is learned in a master's degree compared to what is needed in the NB process. This might address the questions of whether to recommend that NBPTS require candidates have an advanced degree before beginning the application.

If there is a positive correlation of NBTPS and graduate degrees, it would also be interesting to find out why most teachers choose a graduate degree before the NB process. It generally takes much longer and is much more expensive, so why are teachers choosing this option first before pursuing the NB process?

I am also curious about how NBCTs continue their professional growth after certification. What is next for them? I wonder if they continue to use the Architecture of Teaching to improve their practice independently, or if they get involved with mentoring other teachers going through the NB process, if they earn Doctorate degrees, what kinds of new leadership roles have they assumed, or how do they choose to improve their practice.

Next, several of the teachers in this study said that the professionalization of teaching was important to them; it was one of the reasons that they chose this certification process. While this does seem to be important to the National Board developers, as stated in the NBPTS mission statement, it was definitely not most of the participants' main focus. Are the developers aware that some teachers are going through the NB process in hopes to professionalize the field, but that other motivations are stronger? What is the public perception of NBPTS and has it changed in the last ten years? Are teachers doing other things in hope of professionalizing teaching other than going through the NB process?

Last, a study could be done with teachers who attempt the NB process but quit. Are there similarities within this group such as number of years teaching, whether or not they have an advanced degree, their motivation to begin the NB process, race, age, or other characteristic?

While the NB process provides great benefits to some teachers, it does not seem to fulfill the needs of the teachers who do not complete the NB process and the reasons behind this could be investigated. As mentioned previously, the participants who did not achieve were not part of my focus group due to the scope of the questions discussed and their lack of knowledge about those topics. A different focus group with different questions could have been conducted with these teachers. Future studies of this group of teachers could provide their perspective on the NB process.

### **My Perspective**

From this study I have learned many things. Going into this project I believed that the NBPTS was the best professional development available to educators and that everyone should attempt it so that they can reflect on their practice. I learned that people experience the NB process in a variety of ways, and not everyone had the same experience that I had. I now believe that while this process is available to all educators, only those confident and experienced in their practice should attempt the requirements. Some people may not think that the positives outweigh the negatives, and some are just not ready for the demands of the NB process itself. For me, upon reflection, the NB process mainly helped me refine things I was already doing and pushed me to do things I knew I should already be doing. It did not provide me with much new knowledge or skills. So while I did grow as an educator during the NB process, I now see this process as more of a certification process to refine skills, as opposed to a professional development/growth opportunity. I found my participants' stories fascinating and I believe that allowing other educators the opportunity to hear these stories may influence their decision to pursue or not pursue NB certification.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Introduction**

1. (Narrative) Describe your NB process.
2. What did you know about the NB process before going through it? How did you learn of it?
3. What do you wish you would have known about the NB process before going through it?

### **Motivation**

4. What was your main motivation for going through the National Board process?
  - a. Was lack of there professional development a motivator?
  - b. Why this process over other professional development options?
  - c. Were you students a motivator?
  - d. What were some other motivators for going through the NB process?
5. Did your motivation change during the NB process or stay consistent?
6. What, if anything, made your motivation change while you were going through the NB process?
7. Did other people motivate/support you in the NB process?
  - a. NBCTs, coworkers, family members, administrators, etc.?
  - b. How did they motivate you and how big of a part were they in your successful completion?
8. Were you part of a cohort? If so, describe your experience.
9. Was your school/district's administration supportive of your endeavor?
  - a. Where did you certify?
  - b. Were there constraints there?

### **Benefits**

10. What incentives does your school/district offer for NBCTs?
  - a. Did this play a part in your motivation?
11. Now that you've completed the NB process, were there any benefits?
  - a. If so, think about the main benefit you got out of it. Is that benefit the same thing that motivated you to complete the NB process? Talk about that.
12. Were there any benefits of the NB process that you got out of it that you didn't anticipate?
  - a. If so, describe them.
13. Were there disadvantages in going through the NB process?
  - a. stress, less focus on teaching, time consumption, etc.
  - b. Did anyone (spouse, kids, students, etc.) suffer while you were going through the NB process?
14. Do you believe it was worth the time/effort/money that you put into it?
  - a. What makes it worth it or not worth it?
15. Do you feel you could have gained the same knowledge/expertise by doing some other process? Maybe taking grad classes, attending conferences, etc? Why or why not?
  - a. Could you pull out one part of NB that was most useful?
  - b. Were there parts that were not useful at all?
16. Did the NB process change your teaching during and/or after completion?
  - a. If so, give examples?

#### Future NBCTs

17. Would you recommend this process to other teachers? If so, who and why? If not, why not?
18. What are your suggestions/recommendations for those contemplating the NB process?

#### Follow Up Questions

19. Do you feel the NB process changed you as a teacher, or just made you more aware of the things you already do? Please explain.
20. If you feel you have changed as a teacher, please give me some specific examples of how you have changed as a teacher due to NBPTS.
21. Take One! is a “sample” of the full NBPTS process where applicants complete only one portfolio entry in a year to see if they are interested in the full process. Should Take One! be a requirement before you are allowed to complete the entire process?
22. Should the one-year timeline for initial submission be increased to a longer time span? Why or why not?
23. What recommendations do you have for NBPTS to improve the NB process? In other words, what would you change about the NB process?
24. Please give me one quote to summarize your NBPTS journey.

## **Appendix B**

### Focus Group Discussion Questions:

1. How important is the professionalization of teaching to you? Is NBPTS a way to encourage that? If so, why/how? If not, are there other ways to do it?
2. How important is administration awareness in regards to NBPTS? What about teacher awareness? If it's important, how should the word be spread?
3. Should NBPTS tie into the new teacher evaluation system? If so, how? If not, why not? What if teachers get a low rating, could this be part of their required professional development plan? Should all teachers up for tenure be asked to complete the NB process? What about those wanting an excellent ranking? What about those who get a needs improvement ranking? (probably not because it's more to prove you're good, not to teach you how to be good, right?)
4. Should components of NBPTS be worked into undergraduate programs or student teaching? Should the NB process be explained during undergraduate work so that awareness is raised? It seems that most participants heard about it through word of mouth, is there a better way? Or is preservice teaching too early of a time to mention the NB process?
5. All participants had a master's degree before doing NBPTS. What are your thoughts on that?
6. Now that NB is over, now what? How do you continue to grow professionally? The things that you are doing now, have they stemmed from your NBPTS journey? (talking at conferences, leadership roles, leading professional development, etc.)
7. Do you believe that teachers go into NBPTS because they believe they are good teachers and want the affirmation, or because they want to know if they are in fact a good teacher? (Tell them that they all seemed confident in their teaching before, ask how they think they would feel going through NB before they were confident.)

8. Cohorts and collaboration were very important to many participants, and those who did not have that wish they did. Should this be a requirement of the NB process? If so, how do you suggest they do that? Require cohort? Or show collegial collaboration through a portfolio/writing?
9. The state offers money to complete the NB process, but does not offer an incentive once you've achieved. Can you comment on that? Do you wish it was reversed?
10. Has going through boards made you more sensitive to diversity in the classroom? Have your teaching style changed due to the needs of your diverse population? If so, how? What do you do differently? What was it about the board process that lead to that change?